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ECLIPSE
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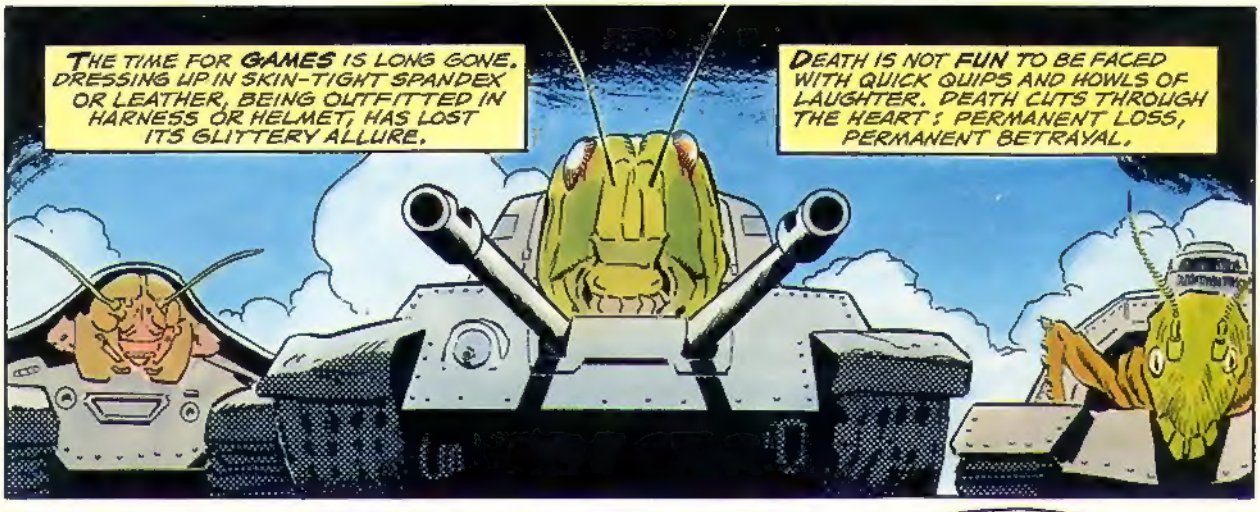
IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS SILENCE -- THE SILENCE OF EMPTINESS. THE SILENCE OF NON-EXISTENCE, WHEN SPACE WAS AN EBONY SWIRL WITHOUT GLOBES OF LIGHT OR SPARK OF LIFE.
NOW THERE IS SILENCE AGAIN. THE SILENCE OF EMPTINESS. THE SILENCE OF THINGS LOST.
Finale!
DENNIS FOREMAN IS GONE. THE YOUTH WHO WAS CALLED STRIKE! IS DEAD.
AND THOSE WHO ARE HIS FRIENDS...
...CAN DO LITTLE MORE THAN DWELL IN THE MUCK OF THEIR OWN MORTALITY.


THE TIME FOR GAMES IS LONG GONE. DRESSING UP IN SKIN-TIGHT SPANDEX OR LEATHER, BEING OUTFITTED IN HARNESS OR HELMET, HAS LOST ITS GLITTERY ALLURE.
DEATH IS NOT FUN TO BE FACED WITH QUICK QUIPS AND HOWLS OF LAUGHTER. DEATH CUTS THROUGH THE HEART: PERMANENT LOSS, PERMANENT BETRAYAL.

ROBIN HOOD WAS A LIE. MERRY MEN CUTTING A SWATH OF JOY THROUGH THE FIELDS OF DECEIT. HOW MANY MEN DIED WITH ERROL FLYNN'S LAUGH ON THEIR BLOOD-CAKED LIPS? HOW MUCH EVIL WAS TRULY STOPPED?
SCOTT KIDA'S MIND ROLLS AND ROLLS IN GREY-FOGGED QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS.

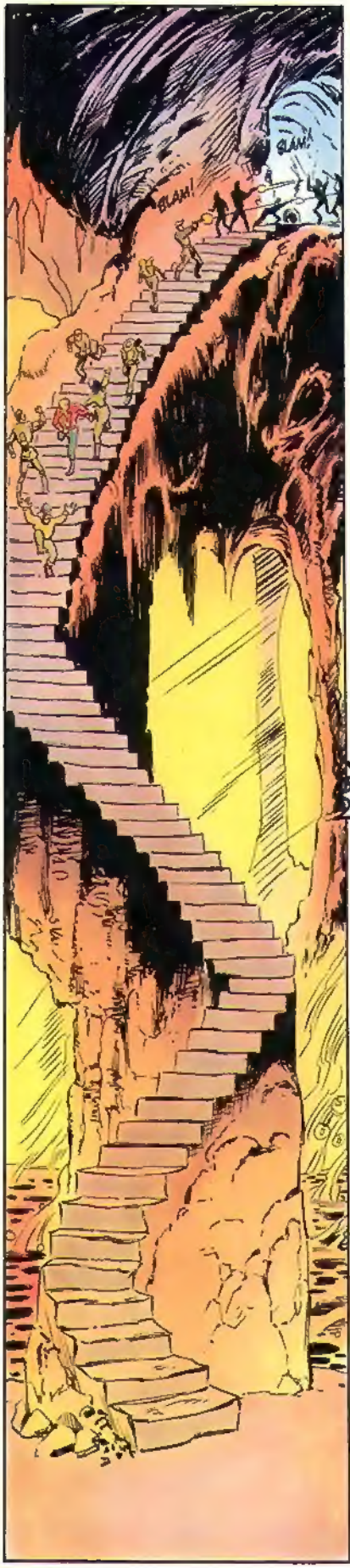
I KEPT WARNING HIM... WARNING HIM THAT IT WASN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES.
BUT I DON'T THINK HE EVER BELIEVED.
CAN'T YOU SEE, MAN? WE'VE ALREADY LOST!
DENNIS'S FIGHT ISN'T OVER. WE MUST GO ON, LAD.
GO ON, LEO? GO ON?

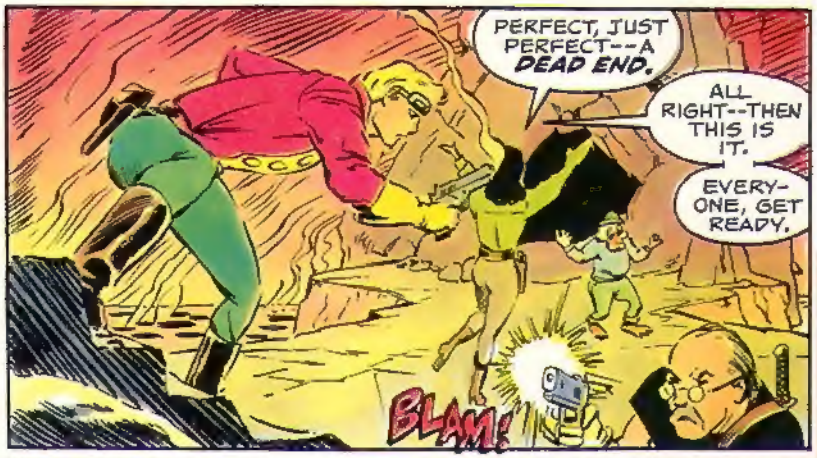
GO ON FOR WHAT? FOR ANOTHER KID TO DIE IN SOME STUPID FIGHT OF YOURS? DENNIS DIDN'T BELONG. I DON'T BELONG.
WE'RE JUST LEARNING HOW NOT TO BE KIDS ANYMORE, AND THEN YOU GUYS DRESS US UP AND FILL US WITH STORIES AND THEN LET US DIE?
YOU MAKE ME SICK.

SHUT UP, SCOTT.
NOBODY BROUGHT YOU HERE TO PLAY GAMES.
WHAPP!
WE DIDN'T LIE TO YOU--EVEN IF YOU LIED TO YOURSELF.
WE'RE HERE BECAUSE THE WHOLE WORLD MAY DIE, AND MAYBE WE'RE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN SAVE IT.
IF IT'S WORTH SAVING.
YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING, BOY?
PROWLER, IF I AM AT LAST TO DIE, THEN I WANT MY DEATH TO COUNT.
WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THEM TO MAKE THE NEXT MOVE.
SWEATT!
WE HAVE TO GO DOWN FIGHTING ALL THE WAY!
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, CHILD. YOU NEED TO MOURN, YET THERE IS NO TIME.
BUT I PROMISE YOU--DENNIS WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.
FOR NOW, FEEL CALMNESS IN YOUR HEART.
IF WE SUCCEED, LATER YOU CAN CRY.
I FEEL SO BAD FOR HIM.
BEANISH, WE ALL DO.
BUT ECLIPSE IS RIGHT--WE CAN'T STOP NOW.
ACE IS CORRECT--THE ENTIRE WORLD SEEMS AGAINST US.

THIS IS THE DOXIE-GLITCH ACE SPOKE OF--A RUPTURE IN TIME THAT CREATES ITS OWN MONSTERS.
GET BACK, ECLIPSE. YOU CANNOT RISK DIRECT CONFRONTATION.
I MUST--WE HAVE NO TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE.
SHOOMM
NOT BAD, SON. BUT BEFORE THE REST OF THIS PLANET DECIDES TO DESTROY US--
--I SUGGEST WE GET OUT OF HERE... QUICKLY!
4

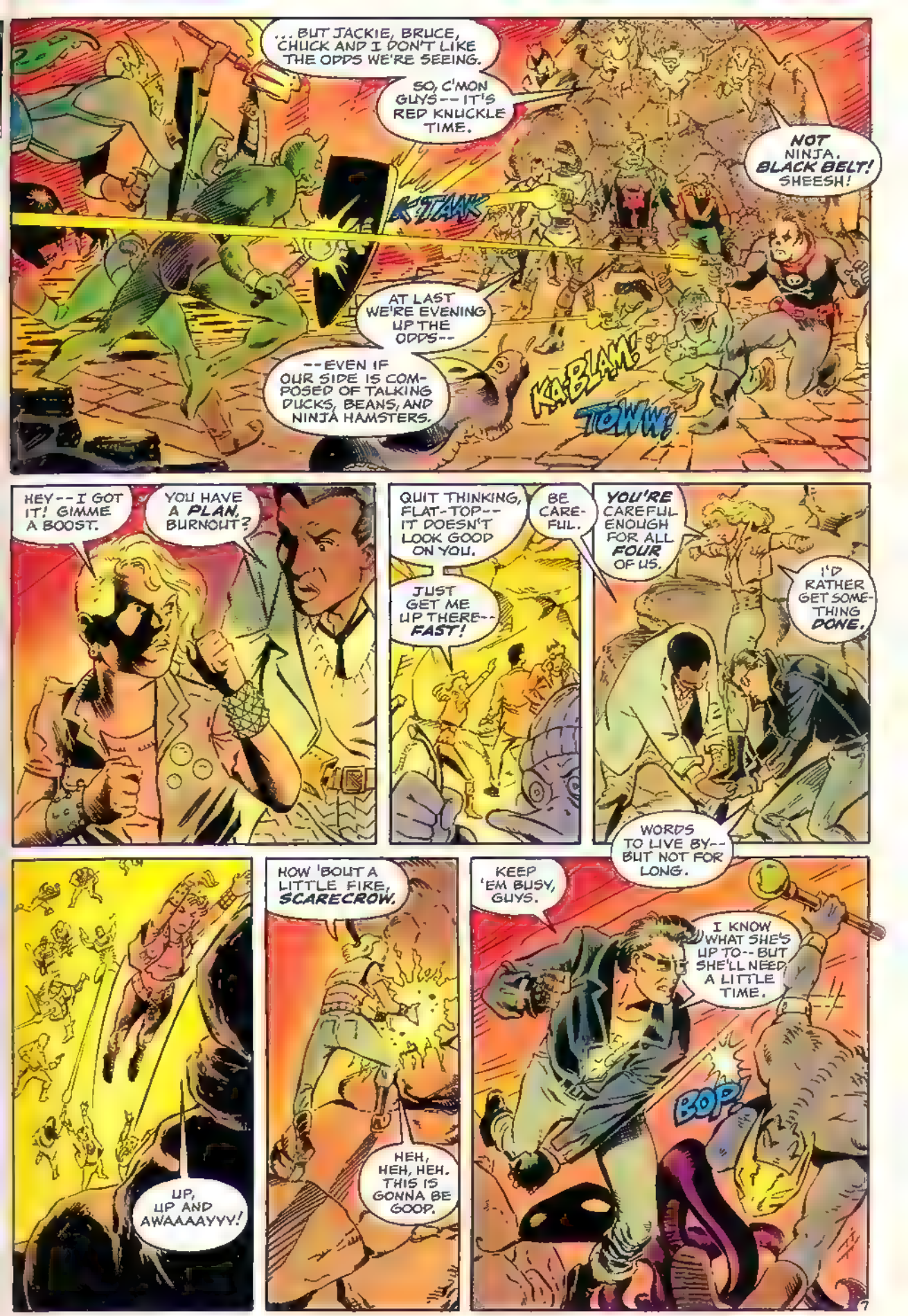
ALL RIGHT, WE'RE HERE. WHAT NOW?
WE LOOK AROUND. THERE MUST BE A REASON MISERY SENT US HERE.
WHO THE HELL KNOWS? I STILL DON'T TRUST THAT LYIN' SKULL-FACED SONNOVA BITCH.
STILL, HIS OWN SURVIVAL IS AT STAKE.
MAYBE, IRON ACE. BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY MY SHORT HAIRS ITCH.
MAYBE THAT'S THE REASON, WOLF--
--IT'S A TRAP!!
I KNEW IT.
MAN, I SHOULD'A BLOWN HIS FREAKIN' HEAD OFF WHILE I HAD THE CHANCE.
MOVE IT, WOLF--OR YOU WON'T HAVE YOURS.
KABLASH!



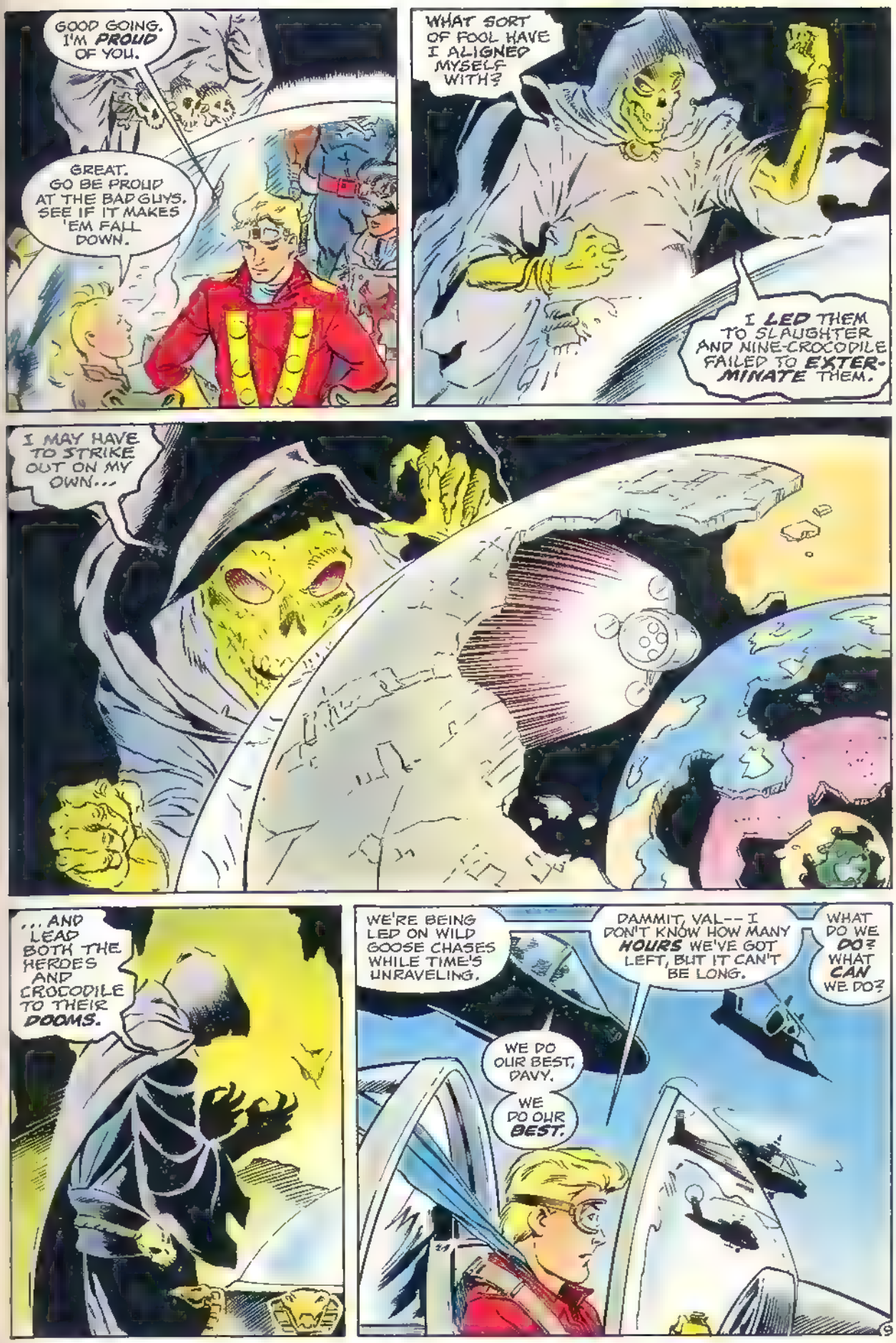


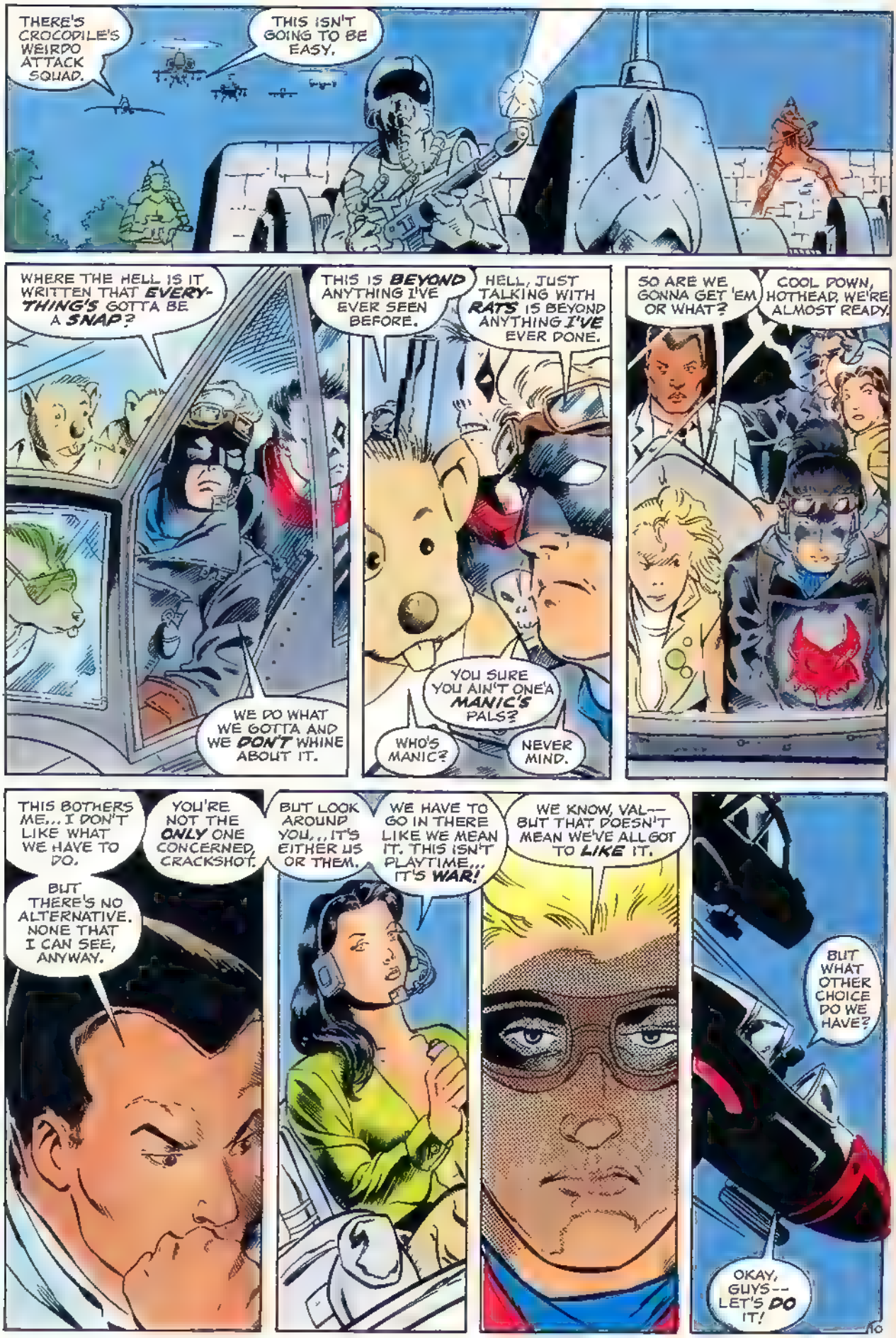
NOT MUTANTS--YOU'VE GOT US CONFUSED WITH THOSE OTHER GUYS. WE'RE ADOLESCENT RADIOACTIVE BLACK BELT HAMSTERS.
AND WE WERE SENT HERE BY THE ALIEN GUARDIANS OF THE COSMIC JELLO...*

*SEE THE AS-YET-UNPUBLISHED "ORION WAR SAGA," — FRED


... BUT JACKIE, BRUCE, CHUCK AND I DON'T LIKE THE ODDS WE'RE SEEING.
SO, C'MON GUYS -- IT'S RED KNUCKLE TIME.
NOT NINJA. BLACK BELT! SHEESH!
KITAAK
AT LAST WE'RE EVENING UP THE ODDS--
--EVEN IF OUR SIDE IS COMPOSED OF TALKING DUCKS, BEANS, AND NINJA HAMSTERS.
KA-BLAM!
TOWW!
HEY -- I GOT IT! GIMME A BOOST.
YOU HAVE A PLAN, BURNOUT?
QUIT THINKING, FLAT-TOP -- IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD ON YOU.
BE CAREFUL.
JUST GET ME UP THERE -- FAST!
YOU'RE CAREFUL ENOUGH FOR ALL FOUR OF US.
I'D RATHER GET SOMETHING DONE.
WORDS TO LIVE BY -- BUT NOT FOR LONG.
UP, UP AND AWAAAAYYY!
HOW 'BOUT A LITTLE FIRE, SCARECROW.
HEH, HEH, HEH. THIS IS GONNA BE GOOD.
KEEP 'EM BUSY, GUYS.
I KNOW WHAT SHE'S UP TO -- BUT SHE'LL NEED A LITTLE TIME.
BOP

OKAY, FLAT-TOP, I'VE LOOSENED IT UP FOR YOU. HIT IT.
JUST GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, OKAY?
RELAX, BURNOUT--THEY DON'T CALL ME CRACKSHOT FOR NOTHING.
YOU MEAN YOU PAY 'EM?
DON'T TRY TO COME UP WITH A SMART RETORT--WE DON'T HAVE TIME. JUST SHOOT.
BE CAREFUL.
I MAY BE AN UTTER FAILURE, AIRBOY--
"BUT IF THERE'S ONE THING I DO RIGHT, IT'S SHOOT."
KRAKK
WHERE'S BURNOUT? SHE'S GOT TO BE OKAY.
IF I'VE KILLED HER--
DRY 'EM, LEE.
I'M TOO MEAN TO DIE. COME ON IN, THE LAVA'S FINE.


GOOD GOING. I'M PROUD OF YOU.
GREAT. GO BE PROUD AT THE BAD GUYS. SEE IF IT MAKES 'EM FALL DOWN.
WHAT SORT OF FOOL HAVE I ALIGNED MYSELF WITH?
I LED THEM TO SLAUGHTER AND NINE-CROCODILE FAILED TO EXTERMINATE THEM.
I MAY HAVE TO STRIKE OUT ON MY OWN...
...AND LEAD BOTH THE HEROES AND CROCODILE TO THEIR DOOMS.
WE'RE BEING LED ON WILD GOOSE CHASES WHILE TIME'S UNRAVELING.
DAMMIT, VAL-- I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY HOURS WE'VE GOT LEFT, BUT IT CAN'T BE LONG.
WHAT DO WE DO? WHAT CAN WE DO?
WE DO OUR BEST, DAVY.
WE DO OUR BEST.


THERE'S CROCODILE'S WEIRDO ATTACK SQUAD.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY.
WHERE THE HELL IS IT WRITTEN THAT EVERY-THING'S GOTTA BE A SNAP?
WE DO WHAT WE GOTTA AND WE DON'T WHINE ABOUT IT.
THIS IS BEYOND ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE.
HELL, JUST TALKING WITH RATS IS BEYOND ANYTHING I'VE EVER DONE.
YOU SURE YOU AIN'T ONE'A MANIC'S PALS?
WHO'S MANIC?
NEVER MIND.
SO ARE WE GONNA GET 'EM OR WHAT?
COOL DOWN, HOTHEAD. WE'RE ALMOST READY.
THIS BOTHERS ME... I DON'T LIKE WHAT WE HAVE TO DO.
BUT THERE'S NO ALTERNATIVE. NONE THAT I CAN SEE, ANYWAY.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE CONCERNED, CRACKSHOT.
BUT LOOK AROUND YOU,, IT'S EITHER US OR THEM.
WE HAVE TO GO IN THERE LIKE WE MEAN IT. THIS ISN'T PLAYTIME,,, IT'S WAR!
WE KNOW, VAL-- BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'VE ALL GOT TO LIKE IT.
BUT WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO WE HAVE?
OKAY, GUYS-- LET'S DO IT!
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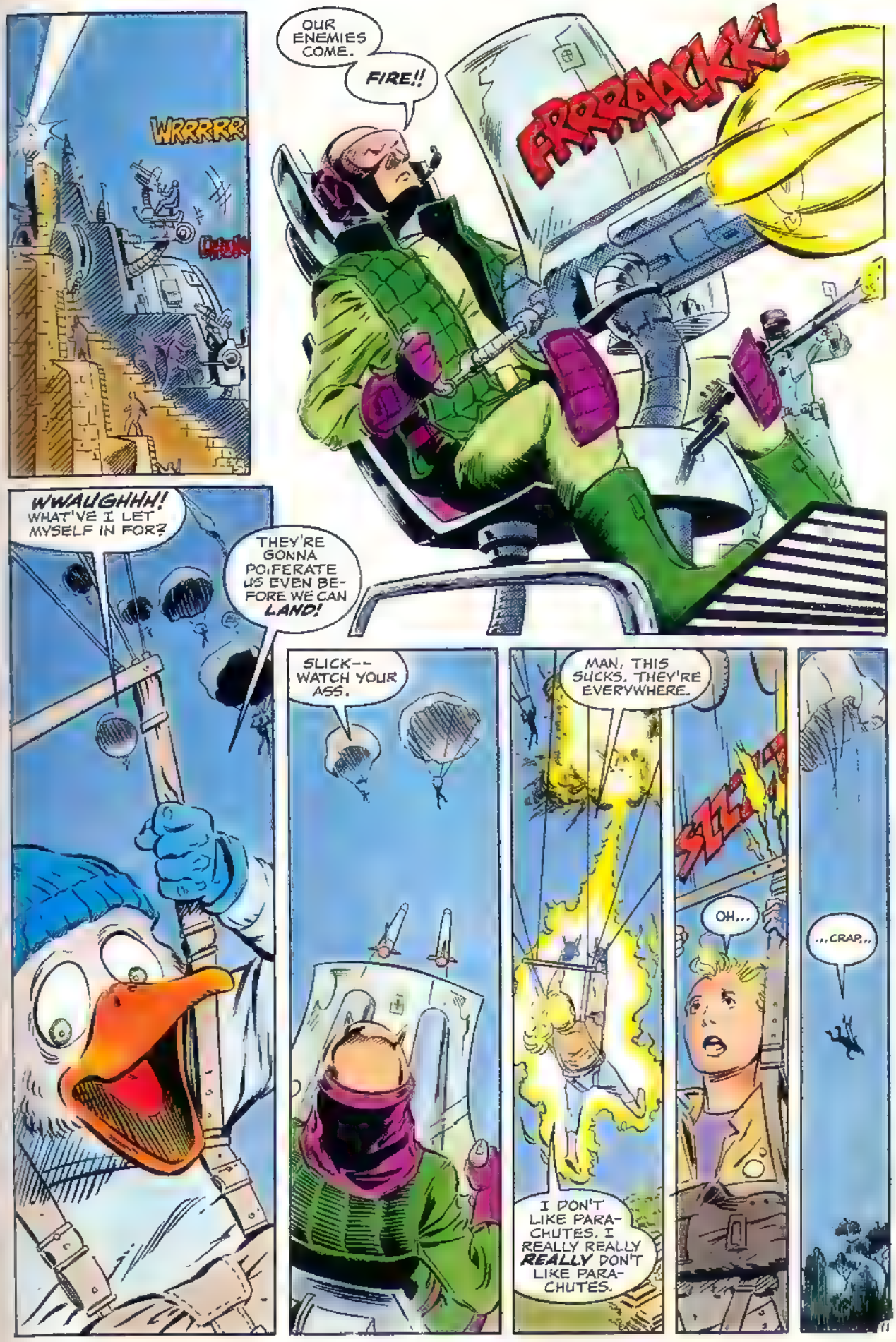
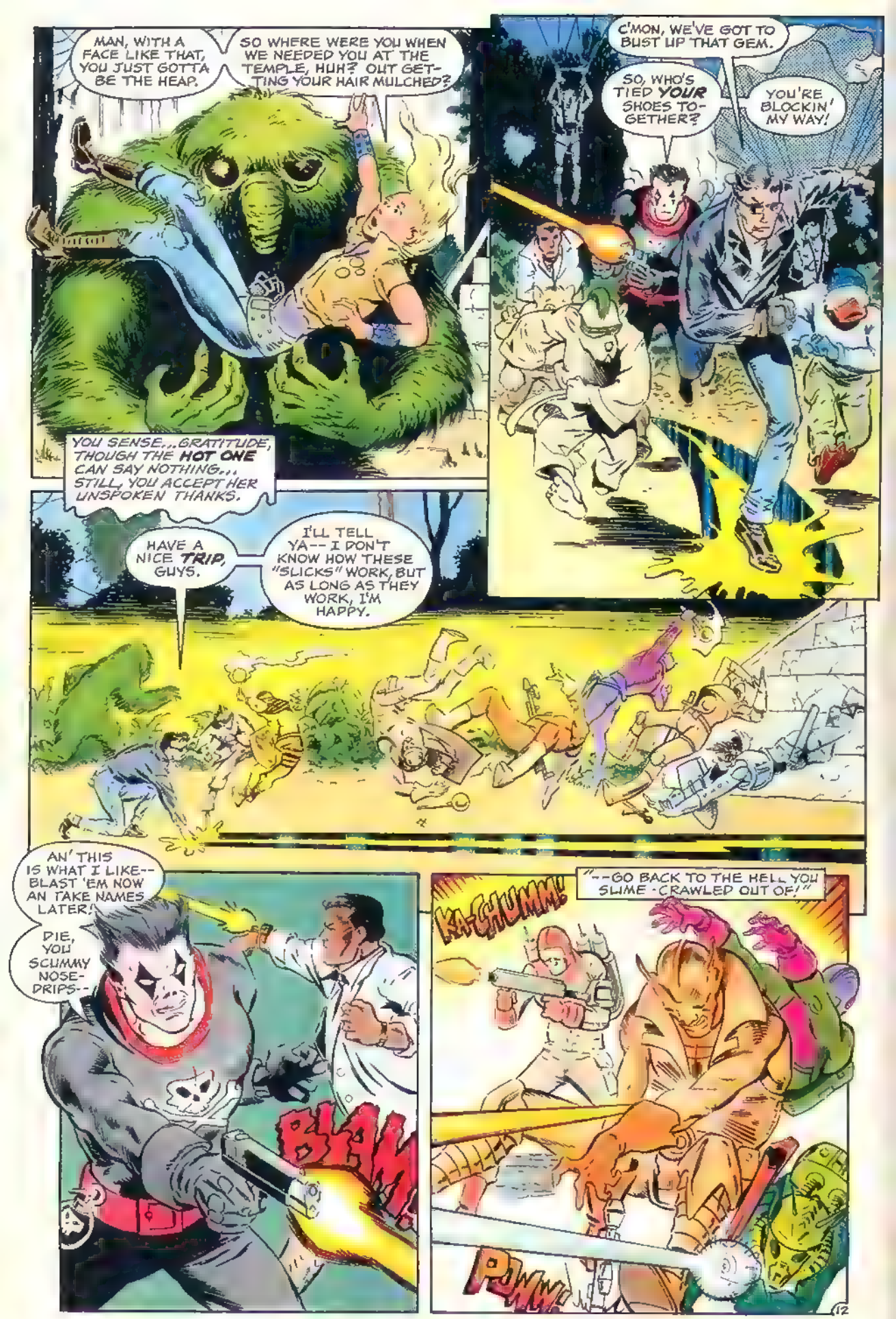
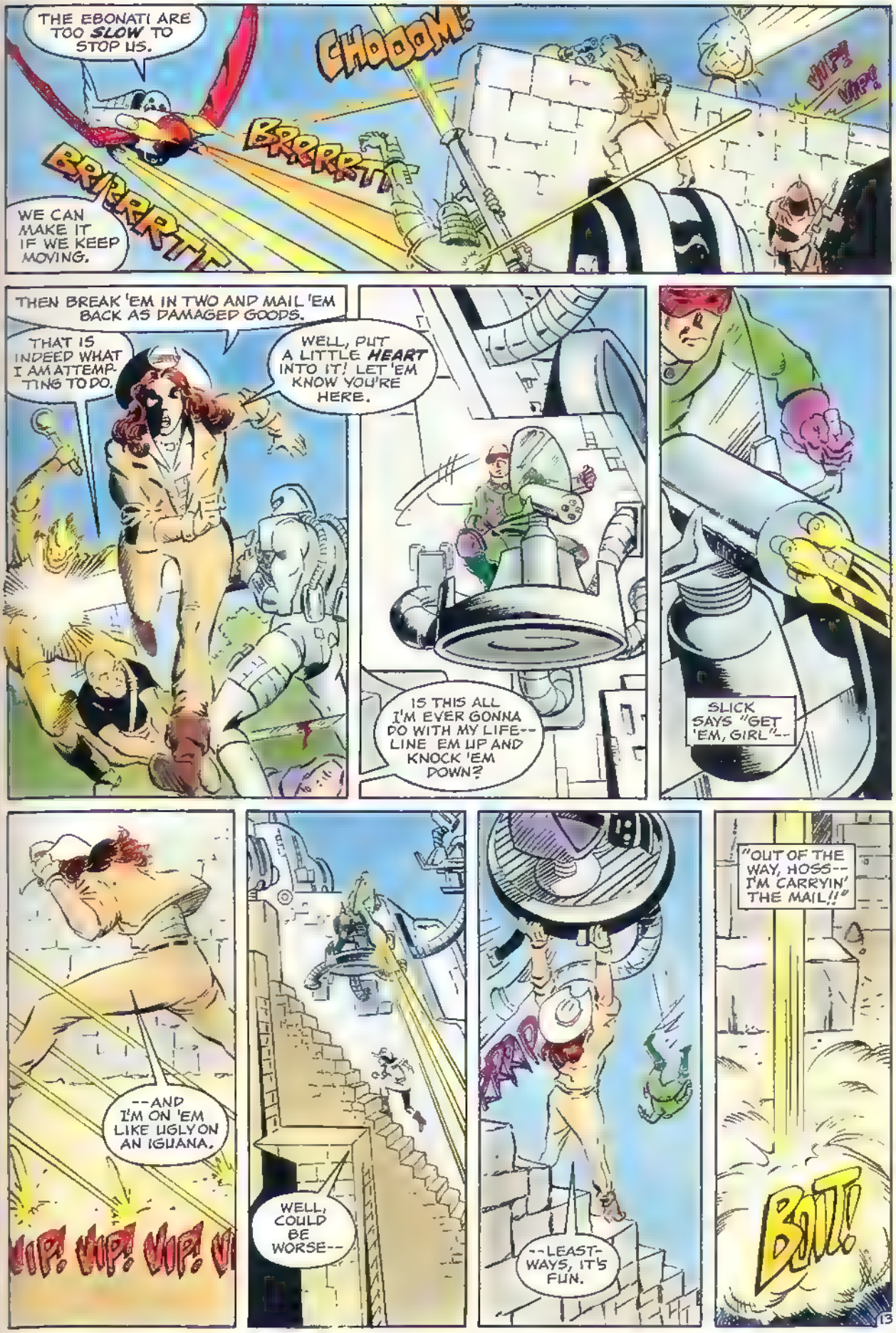
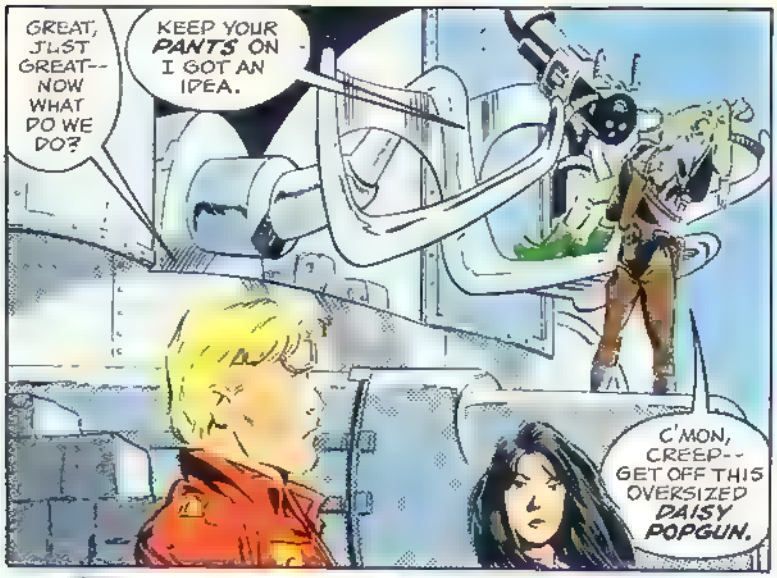

WRRRR?
OUR ENEMIES COME.
FIRE!!
FRRRAAKK!
WWAUGHHH! WHAT'VE I LET MYSELF IN FOR?
THEY'RE GONNA PO,FERATE US EVEN BE-FORE WE CAN LAND!
SLICK-- WATCH YOUR ASS.
MAN, THIS SUCKS. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.
I DON'T LIKE PARA-CHUTES. I REALLY REALLY REALLY DON'T LIKE PARA-CHUTES.
SIZZ
OH...
...CRAP...

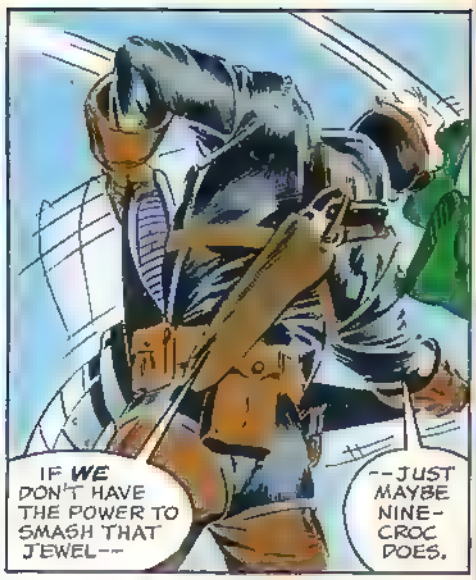

MAN, WITH A FACE LIKE THAT, YOU JUST GOTTA BE THE HEAP.
SO WHERE WERE YOU WHEN WE NEEDED YOU AT THE TEMPLE, HUH? OUT GETTING YOUR HAIR MULCHED?
C'MON, WE'VE GOT TO BUST UP THAT GEM.
SO, WHO'S TIED YOUR SHOES TOGETHER?
YOU'RE BLOCKIN' MY WAY!
YOU SENSE... GRATITUDE, THOUGH THE HOT ONE CAN SAY NOTHING... STILL, YOU ACCEPT HER UNSPOKEN THANKS.
HAVE A NICE TRIP, GUYS.
I'LL TELL YA-- I DON'T KNOW HOW THESE "SLICKS" WORK, BUT AS LONG AS THEY WORK, I'M HAPPY.
AN' THIS IS WHAT I LIKE-- BLAST 'EM NOW AN TAKE NAMES LATER!
DIE, YOU SCUMMY NOSE-DRIPS--
BLAM!
"--GO BACK TO THE HELL YOU SLIME-CRAWLED OUT OF!"
KA-SLUMM!
POW!

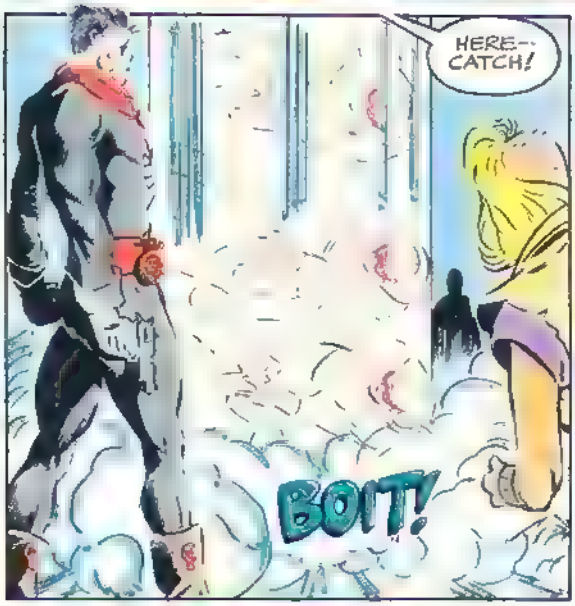

THE EBONATI ARE TOO SLOW TO STOP US.
CHOOOM!
BRRRRT!
BRRRRT!
WE CAN MAKE IT IF WE KEEP MOVING.
VIP! VIP!
THEN BREAK 'EM IN TWO AND MAIL 'EM BACK AS DAMAGED GOODS.
THAT IS INDEED WHAT I AM ATTEMPTING TO DO.
WELL, PUT A LITTLE HEART INTO IT! LET 'EM KNOW YOU'RE HERE.
IS THIS ALL I'M EVER GONNA DO WITH MY LIFE-- LINE 'EM UP AND KNOCK 'EM DOWN?
SLICK SAYS "GET 'EM, GIRL"--
--AND I'M ON 'EM LIKE UGLY ON AN IGUANA.
VIP! VIP! VIP!
WELL, COULD BE WORSE--
--LEAST-WAYS, IT'S FUN.
"OUT OF THE WAY, HOSS-- I'M CARRYIN' THE MAIL!!"
BAM!

YOU READY, SKY?
I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN PULL THE FAT OUTTA THE FIRE--
--BUT I'LL TELL YA ONE THING, PAL...
WE'RE NOT GONNA MAKE IT EASY!
IT WOULD BE BEST TO MOVE IN QUICKLY WHILE THEY ARE DISORIENTED.
REMEMBER, EVEN CONFUSED, THEY STILL OUTNUMBER US.
MISERABLE STINKIN' LITTLE SCUM!
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT, CREEP? YOU NEVER SAW A BLACK-BELT DUCK BEFORE?

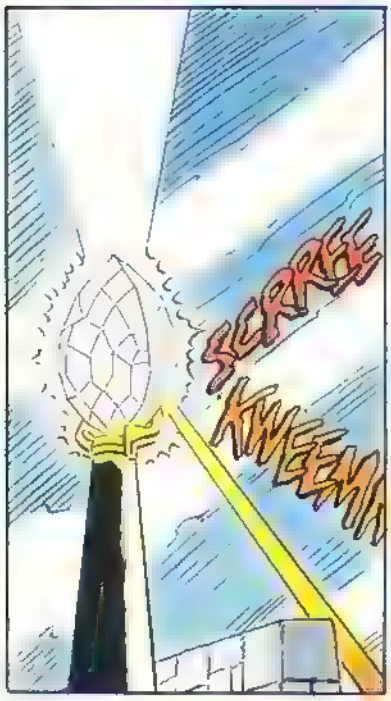
MANOMAN, I DON'T BELIEVE WE MADE IT UP HERE.
THEN THERE'S STILL A CHANCE.
YEAH, IF WE CAN SMASH THE JEWEL SO THE OTHERS CAN DESTROY THE SATELLITES.
ANYONE ELSE HAVE AN IDEA, OR IS THIS UP TO ME? NO TAKERS? HOW'D I GUESS?
ALL I CAN SAY IS THERE'D BETTER BE A FULL PARDON IN IT FOR US AFTER THIS.
I'M SICK OF WORKING FREE!
OKAY, GOT A RUNNING START-- I CAN SLICK MY WAY UP TO THE TOP...
...THEN, ALL I GOTTA DO IS LOOSEN THE JEWEL...
...BUST IT FROM ITS MOUNTING.
OKAY... I CAN FEEL THE BOND IN THERE. SOME SORT OF GLUE OR SOMETHING.
DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE.
GOTTA GET IN THERE. GOTTA FIND A CRACK OR SOMETHING. THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY.
UGHH!
THAT... SMARTS.
DAMMIT-- I CAN'T DO IT.
THERE'S SOME SORT OF FORCE FIELD SURROUNDING IT... I CAN'T BREAK THROUGH.
WE'RE SCREWED, BLUED AND TATTOOED.
15

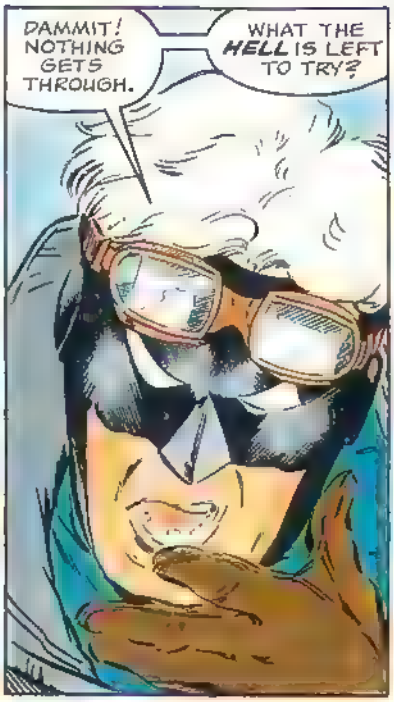

GREAT, JUST GREAT-- NOW WHAT DO WE DO?
KEEP YOUR PANTS ON I GOT AN IDEA.
C'MON, CREEP-- GET OFF THIS OVERSIZED DAISY POPGUN.


IF WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO SMASH THAT JEWEL--
--JUST MAYBE NINE-CROC DOES.


HERE-- CATCH!
BOIT!

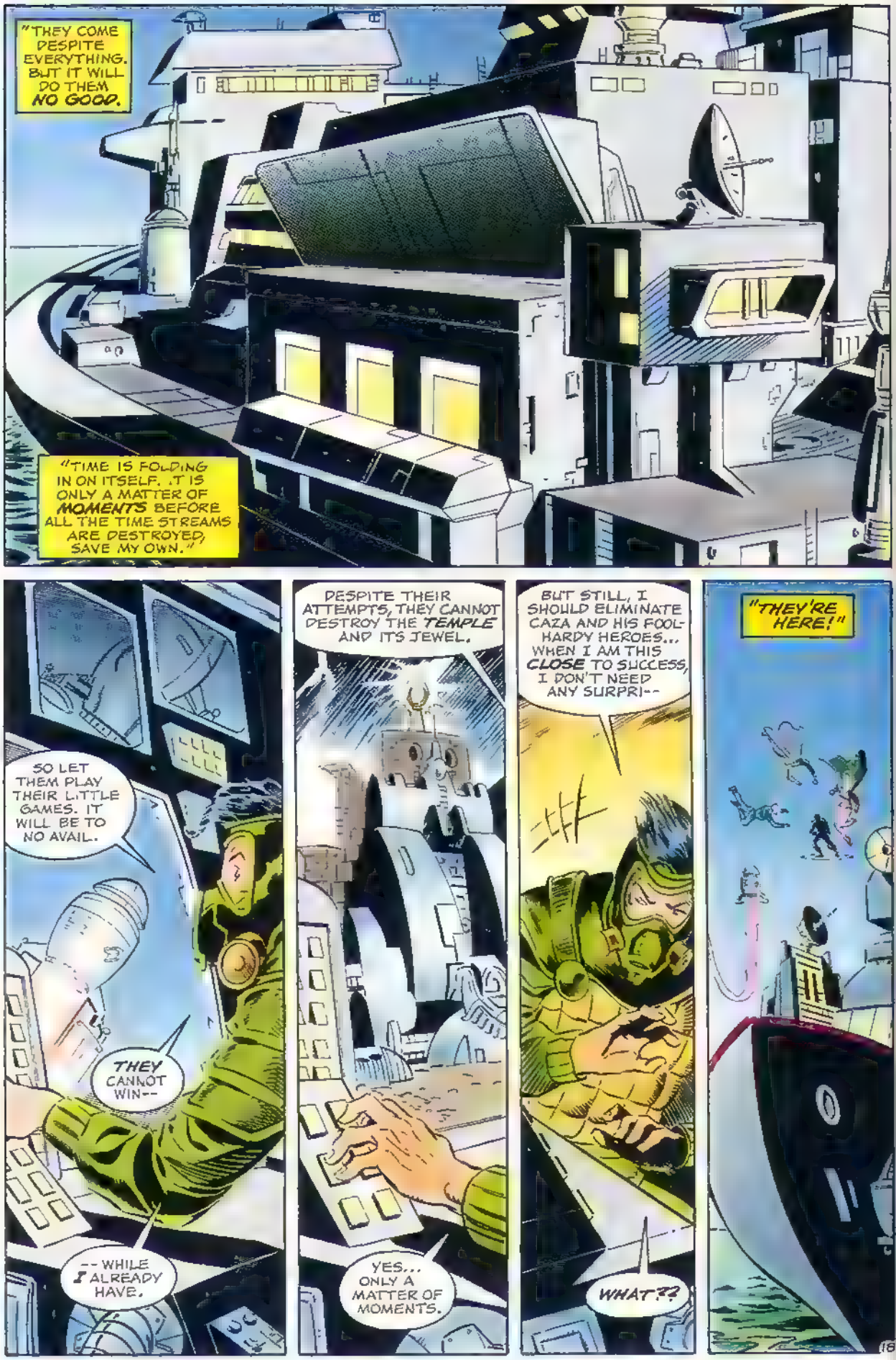
CROSS YOUR FINGERS, TOES, AND EYES--
THIS IS IT!


SLCRRSH
KNEEEM

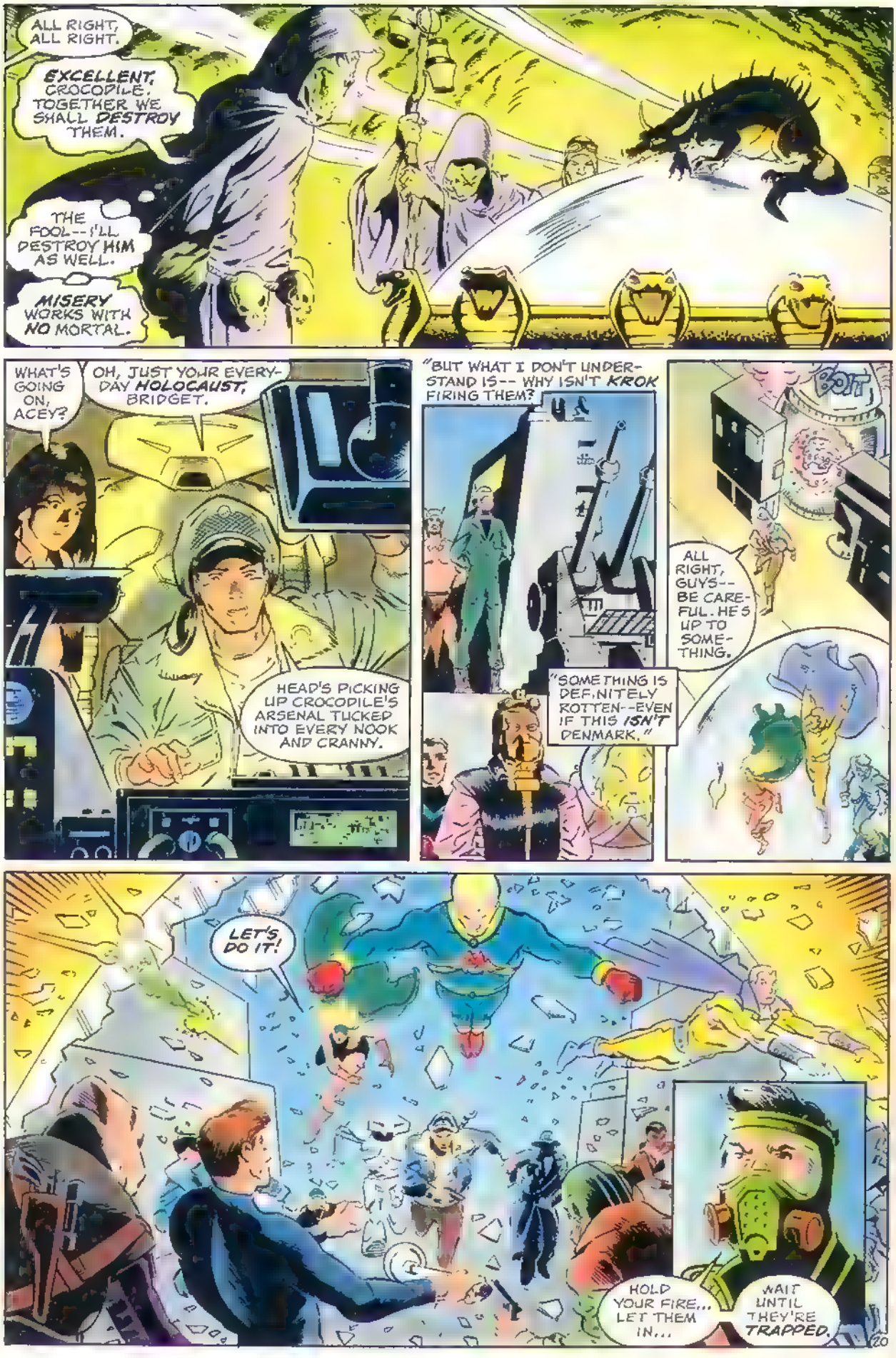

DAMMIT! NOTHING GETS THROUGH.
WHAT THE HELL IS LEFT TO TRY?

WE MADE IT TO MEXICO, FOUGHT AND WON AGAINST CROCODILE'S MEN--
--AND NOW WE'RE HELPLESS.
DON'T LOOK AT ME. I JUST HIT THINGS. IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, WE'LL NEED ANOTHER IDEA.

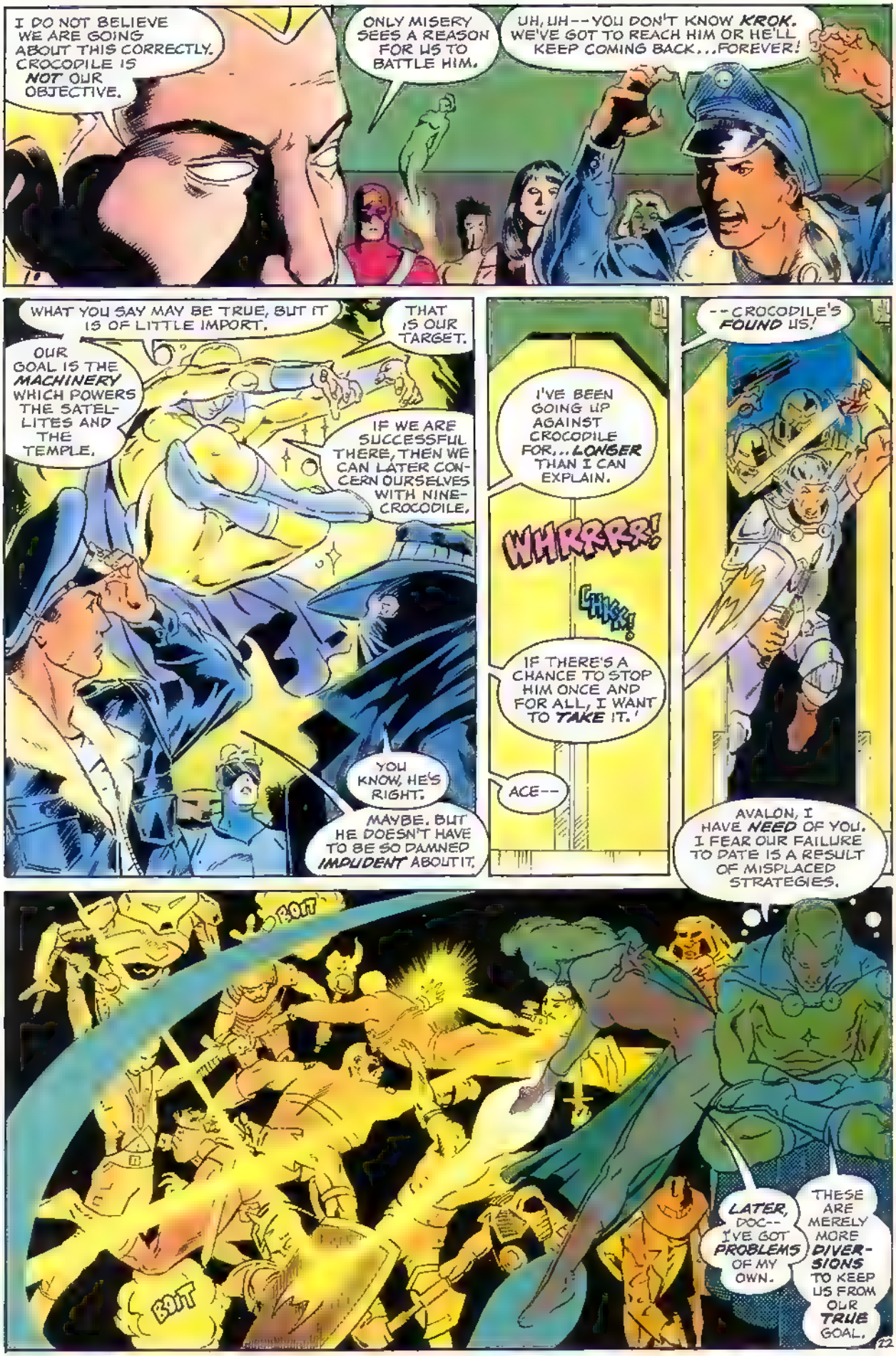
A TIME-OUT OUT OF TIME...
...T WON'T BE LONG NOW.
I'M WORRIED, ACE... DO YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN STOP NINE-CROCODILE... AND IN TIME?
DO IT? I DOUBT IT. IN TIME?-- PROBABLY NOT.
THEN-- THEN WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY FRIEND...?
IT'LL WORK OUT, BEANISH. WE'LL JUST TRY HARDER.
SCOTT, WE NEED TO TALK.
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING I WANT TO HEAR, LEO.
HEY, KID-- IGNORE THE GEEZER. LET'S YOU AND ME TALK.
LOOK, SARGE. I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU, EITHER. I JUST WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM LEO.
ACCEPTED. YOU KNOW I CARED FOR DENNIS. OH, SURE, WE FOUGHT LIKE HELL, BUT YOU SEE--
-- I KNEW WHAT THE HARNESS WAS DOING TO HIM, SO HOW COULD I BLAME HIM FOR WHAT HE SAID?
...ERYONE THINKS I'M CRAZY, ...CTING THE WAY I AM. ...AYBE DENNIS AND I DIDN'T GET ALONG, BUT--
HEY, LOOK AT THE STRIPES ON MY COWL, PAL. I WAS IN THE WAR. WHEN I ENLISTED, I WAS PROBABLY A YEAR OR SO YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE NOW.
I SAW PEOPLE I BARELY ...NEW DYING ALL AROUND ME AND EVERY TIME I ... IT MADE ME SICK. BELIEVE ME, I UNDERSTAND.
BUT I'LL TELL YOU, SCOTT--THERE'S NO GUARANTEE YOU'LL MAKE IT THROUGH LIFE IN ONE PIECE. YOU CAN BUY IT CROSSING THE STREET OR HAVING A RADIO FALL INTO YOUR BATHTUB.
SO YOU JUST GOTTA DO WHAT'S GOT TO BE DONE, AND ACCEPT WHATEVER HAPPENS.
I KNOW THAT...I'M NOT STUPID. IT'S JUST THAT DENNIS'S DEATH SCARED ME, AND I KEEP THINKING LEO WOULD BE ALL OVER ME IF HE KNEW I WAS SCARED.
I THINK THAT GUY'S MADE OUT OF COLD STEEL. SOMETIMES I DON'T THINK HE HAS A SINGLE HUMAN FEELING IN HIS BODY.
YEAH, I DON'T UNDERSTAND HIM MYSELF. AND FRANKLY, I DON'T THINK IT'S IMPORTANT IF WE DO OR NOT.
WE JUST CARRY ON BY OURSELVES. DO OUR BEST, ONE STEP AT A TIME...
...ONE DAY AT A TIME.


"THEY COME DESPITE EVERYTHING. BUT IT WILL DO THEM NO GOOD.
"TIME IS FOLDING IN ON ITSELF. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF MOMENTS BEFORE ALL THE TIME STREAMS ARE DESTROYED, SAVE MY OWN."
SO LET THEM PLAY THEIR LITTLE GAMES. IT WILL BE TO NO AVAIL.
THEY CANNOT WIN--
-- WHILE I ALREADY HAVE.
DESPITE THEIR ATTEMPTS, THEY CANNOT DESTROY THE TEMPLE AND ITS JEWEL.
YES... ONLY A MATTER OF MOMENTS.
BUT STILL, I SHOULD ELIMINATE CAZA AND HIS FOOLHARDY HEROES... WHEN I AM THIS CLOSE TO SUCCESS, I DON'T NEED ANY SURPRI--
WHAT??
"THEY'RE HERE!"

DESTROY THEM!
SSZZZZZ!
IZRAKK
BEHIND ME. I WILL SUMMON A FORCE SHIELD TO PROTECT US.
YEAH, BUT HOW LONG CAN YOU KEEP IT GOING?
IT MIGHT BE BEST IF YOU DON'T ASK.
OKEYFINE.
THEY CONTROL THE TEMPLE, BUT THEY CAN'T DESTROY IT.
MY SATELLITES ARE IMPERVIOUS TO THEIR ATTACKS, AND YET THEY STILL MOVE CLOSER. THEY'RE FOOLS...THEY'RE--
NINE-CROCODILE...
MISERY? WHAT IS IT? I HAVE NO TIME FOR GAMES.
AND I NO TIME FOR YOUR IMPUDENCE.
YOUR INCOMPETENT WARRIORS CANNOT DESTROY THE HEROES BY THEMSELVES. LET THEIR FORCES ENTER YOUR FORTRESS. FIGHT THEM WHERE YOU ARE MASTER.
THAT'S INSANE. THERE'S SO MUCH HERE THEY CAN DESTROY...
I HAVE MY OWN SECRETS AND ABILITIES, CROCODILE. AND ARE WE NOT... PARTNERS?
QUICKLY. THEY COME. MAKE YOUR DECISION.

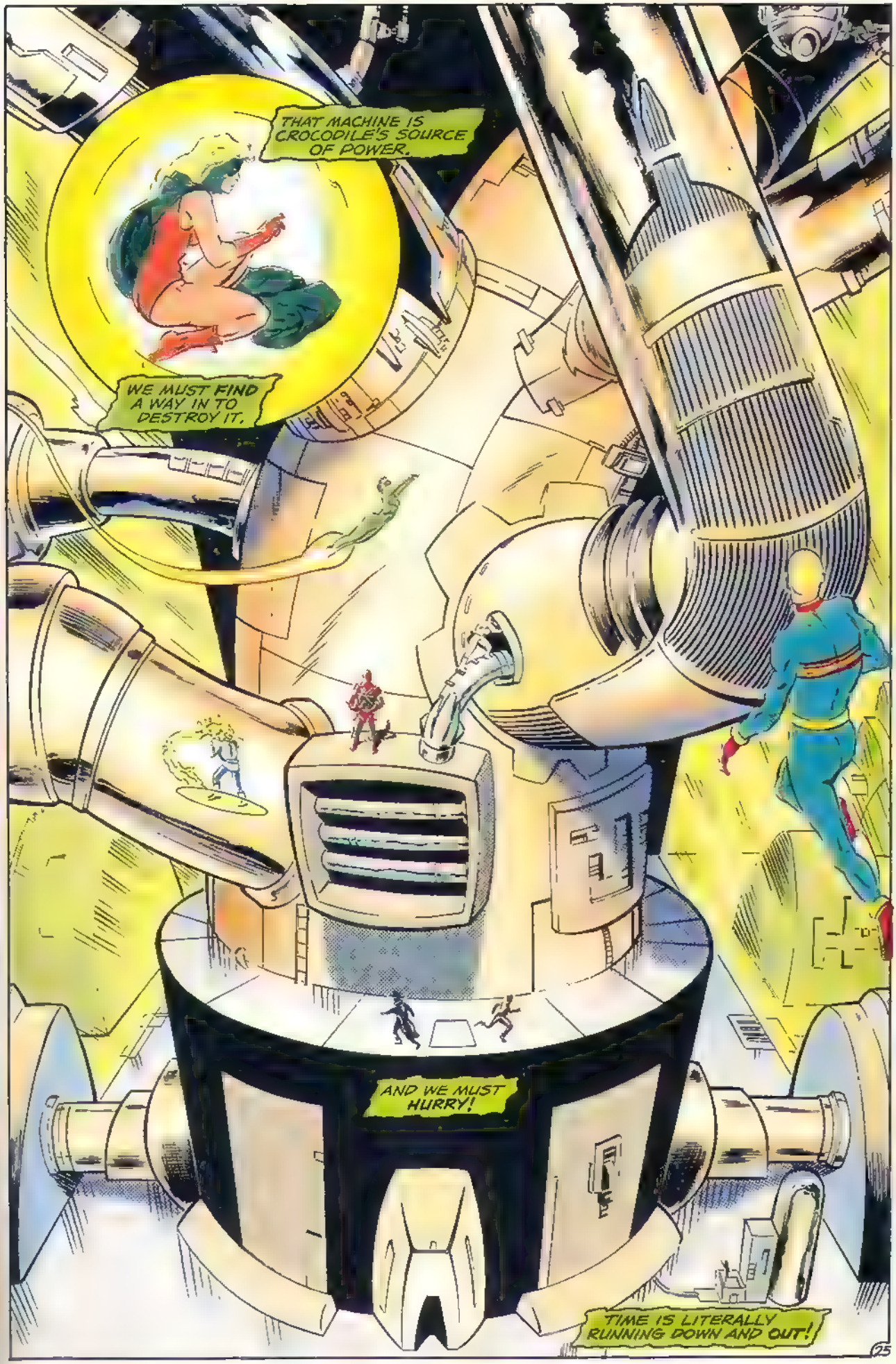

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
EXCELLENT, CROCODILE. TOGETHER WE SHALL DESTROY THEM.
THE FOOL--I'LL DESTROY HIM AS WELL.
MISERY WORKS WITH NO MORTAL.
WHAT'S GOING ON, ACEY?
OH, JUST YOUR EVERY-DAY HOLOCAUST, BRIDGET.
HEAD'S PICKING UP CROCODILE'S ARSENAL TUCKED INTO EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY.
"BUT WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS-- WHY ISN'T KROK FIRING THEM?
"SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY ROTTEN--EVEN IF THIS ISN'T DENMARK."
BOOT
ALL RIGHT, GUYS-- BE CAREFUL. HE'S UP TO SOMETHING.
LET'S DO IT!
HOLD YOUR FIRE... LET THEM IN...
WAIT UNTIL THEY'RE TRAPPED.

HOLD YOUR GROUND... WAIT... WAIT... THERE!
THEY'RE IN. OPEN FIRE!
NOT SO FAST, JERKFACE! WATCH WHERE YOU POINT THAT THING.
THESE GUYS ARE PUSHOVERS. MOVE IN.
KRRASH!
IT APPEARS OUR WAY IS BLOCKED.
MISERY?
MOVE ASIDE, APPARITION. WE HAVE NO REASON TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
THAT IS WHERE YOU ARE WRONG.
YOU DON'T TRUST ME, AND THERE IS NO REASON YOU SHOULD.
BUT KNOW THAT I WISH NINE-CROCODILE DESTROYED AS MUCH AS YOU DO.
HIS NIGHTGAUNTS AND EBONATI FORCES ARE DEPLETED. HE IS POWERLESS.
MOVE IN QUICKLY OR HE WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MAD PLAN.
MISERY, YOU TRAITOR-- WE HAVE THE WORLD COWERING BEFORE US.
THEY CAN'T WIN.
PERHAPS NOT, CROCOPILE...
... BUT EVEN AS YOU DESTROY THEM, THEY WILL MOST CERTAINLY DESTROY YOU. THEN ONLY MISERY WILL BE THE VICTOR.
BELIEVE WHAT YOU WILL, MISERY, BUT ONCE THOSE GREAT HEROES ARE GONE--
--I SWEAR YOU WILL BE NEXT.
THE GAME IS AFOOT. AND I SHALL SIT BACK AND WATCH AS EACH PAWN FALLS.
INDEED, THIS IS A GLORIOUS DAY.

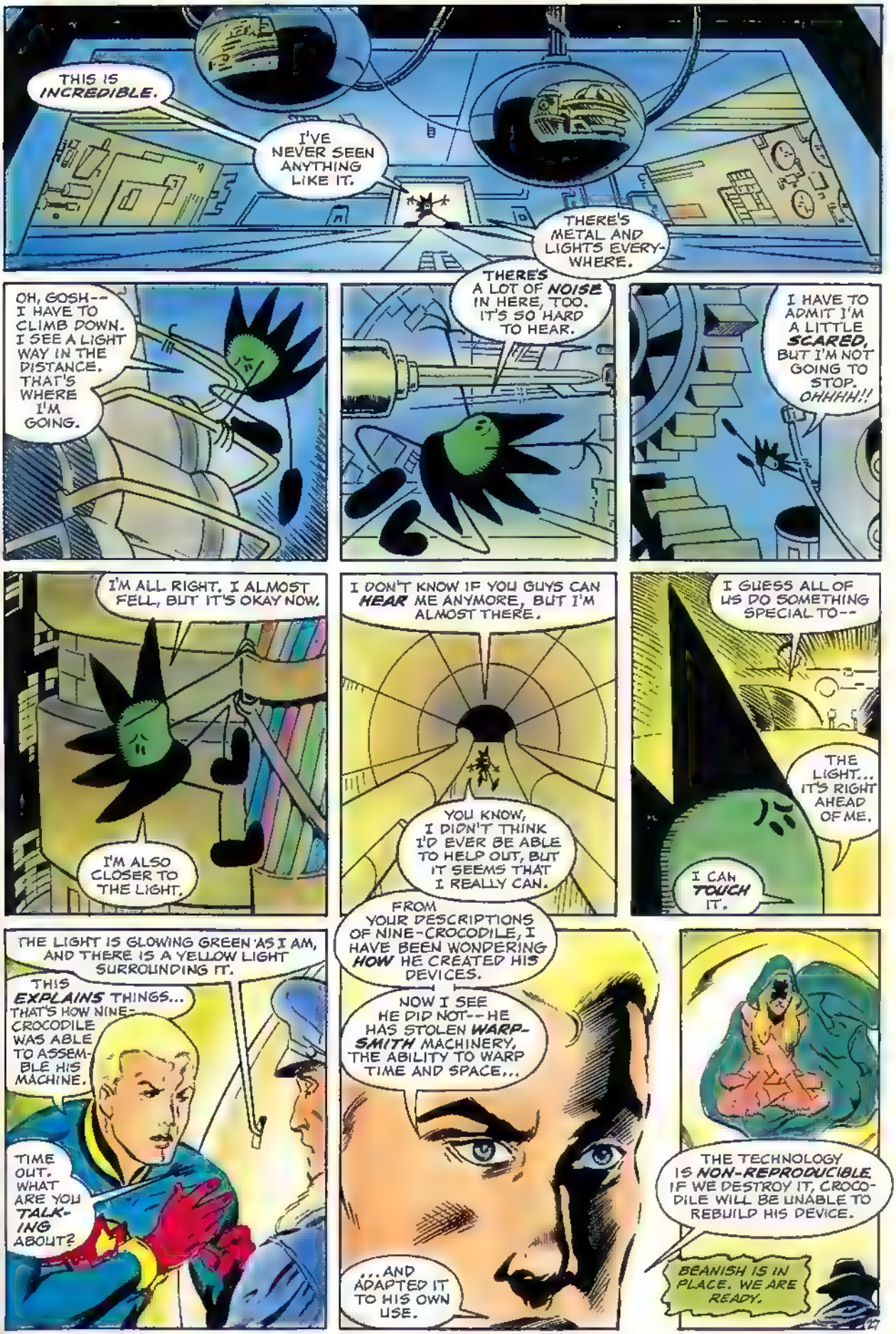

I DO NOT BELIEVE WE ARE GOING ABOUT THIS CORRECTLY. CROCODILE IS NOT OUR OBJECTIVE.
ONLY MISERY SEES A REASON FOR US TO BATTLE HIM.
UH, UH--YOU DON'T KNOW KROK. WE'VE GOT TO REACH HIM OR HE'LL KEEP COMING BACK...FOREVER!
WHAT YOU SAY MAY BE TRUE, BUT IT IS OF LITTLE IMPORT.
THAT IS OUR TARGET.
OUR GOAL IS THE MACHINERY WHICH POWERS THE SATELLITES AND THE TEMPLE.
IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL THERE, THEN WE CAN LATER CONCERN OURSELVES WITH NINE-CROCODILE.
YOU KNOW, HE'S RIGHT.
MAYBE. BUT HE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SO DAMNED IMPUDENT ABOUT IT.
I'VE BEEN GOING UP AGAINST CROCODILE FOR...LONGER THAN I CAN EXPLAIN.
WHRRRR!
CHICK!
IF THERE'S A CHANCE TO STOP HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL, I WANT TO TAKE IT.
ACE--
--CROCODILE'S FOUND US!
AVALON, I HAVE NEED OF YOU. I FEAR OUR FAILURE TO DATE IS A RESULT OF MISPLACED STRATEGIES.
BOIT
BOIT
LATER, DOC--I'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF MY OWN.
THESE ARE MERELY MORE DIVERSIONS TO KEEP US FROM OUR TRUE GOAL.

THEN I MUST INTERFERE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT WE ARE NOT DELAYED.
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO, DOC? I WAS JUST STARTING TO ENJOY MYSELF.
AVALON, YOUR POWERS ARE AS ELDRITCH AS MY OWN.
WE WILL BE A CONDUIT THROUGH TIME AND SPACE.
FOR A BRIEF TIME, WE MUST BE ONE.
I PRAY YOUR FRAIL BODY CAN ACCEPT MY ENERGIES.
SHE WILL LEAD YOU TO THE MACHINES...
...WHILE I TRAVEL BACK TO THE AZTEC TEMPLE...
..WE ARE LINKED, THE TWO OF US...
...MY MIND CONTROLS US BOTH.
TOGETHER WE SHALL DESTROY MACHINE AND TEMPLE.
WE CANNOT ATTACK THE TEMPLE AND SATELLITES AS IF THEY ARE TWO DIFFERENT THREATS. ONLY THEIR SIMULTANEOUS DESTRUCTIONS MAY SAVE THE TIME STREAMS FROM COLLAPSING.
NOW GO. OUR MISSION IS ALMOST COMPLETE.
WHY DOES HE REMIND ME OF F9 ON THE JUKEBOX? YOU KNOW THE SONG...
...THE WORLD'S FALLING APART...
..WE'RE ALL DOOMED TO HELL--
-- BUT BE HAPPY.

MY FRIENDS, HEAR ME OUT.
ECLIPSE? HELL-- HE'LL ALWAYS BE ZZED TO ME.
ECLIPSE!
TIME IS LIMITED. WE MUST CONCENTRATE ON DESTROYING THE SATELLITES. CRACKSHOT, YOU WILL BE NEEDED.
ECLIPSE, WE'VE TRIED IT, AND NOT EVEN MIRACLEMAN COULD GET NEAR THEM.
WE WILL CONCENTRATE ALL THE WEAPONS IN THE TEMPLE... BUT ONLY ON MY COMMAND.
WHEN IN HELL WERE YOU APPOINTED LEADER?
SOMETHING TELLS ME HE WOULDN'T HAVE APPEARED HERE UNLESS HE HAD AN IDEA.
YOU TELL ME WHAT TO SHOOT, AND I'LL DO IT. WITH THE PROPER COORDINATES, I COULD HIT A FLY ON THE RINGS OF SATURN.
TO STRAIN AND THEREFORE SHATTER CROCODILE'S DEFENSES, ALL MUST BE ATTACKED SIMULTANEOUSLY.
AND I SHALL DEAL WITH CROCODILE'S JEWEL.
THERE IS NO LEADER, SKYWOLF... WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO END THE MENACE THAT ZZED HAD BEGUN.
MY MACHINES ARE NOT NEARLY POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CAUSE THIS DESTRUCTION. THEY ARE BEING POWERED BY NINE-CROCODILE.
THEREFORE THE ATTACK MUST BE THREE-SIDED. YOU WILL DEAL WITH THE SATELLITES. MIRACLEMAN AND THE OTHERS ARE ATTACKING THE SIX-WORLDS.
NOW, LET US TAKE OUR PLACES.


THAT MACHINE IS CROCODILE'S SOURCE OF POWER.
WE MUST FIND A WAY IN TO DESTROY IT.
AND WE MUST HURRY!
TIME IS LITERALLY RUNNING DOWN AND OUT!

OVER HERE -- ONLY ONE ENTRANCE, BUT TOO SMALL FOR ANY OF US TO ENTER.
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, TUBBO. I'M A SIZE ONE AND SHRINKING!
MOVE ASIDE -- THIS IS UP MY ALLEY.
DAMMIT -- CROC'S GOT A FORCE-FIELD PROTECTING IT.
DAMN DAMN DAMN! WE FINALLY MAKE IT TO OZ, ONLY THE EMERALD GATE'S STUCK.
SO WE'VE COME ALL THIS WAY ONLY TO LOSE?
THE FAT LADY HAS NOT YET BEGUN HER ARIA.
GREAT -- YOU'RE SPOUTING CLICHES AND WE'VE GOT TEN MINUTES BEFORE THE UNIVERSE GOES BLOTZO.
MAYBE NOT. MAYBE THERE IS A WAY. BEANISH...
ME?
MAYBE A BEAN CAN GO WHERE A HUMAN CAN'T.
ME?
WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE?
ME?
SURE, WHY NOT. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR.
BE CAREFUL IN THERE.
IT'S VERY DARK...


THIS IS INCREDIBLE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
THERE'S METAL AND LIGHTS EVERYWHERE.
THERE'S A LOT OF NOISE IN HERE, TOO. IT'S SO HARD TO HEAR.
OH, GOSH-- I HAVE TO CLIMB DOWN. I SEE A LIGHT WAY IN THE DISTANCE. THAT'S WHERE I'M GOING.
I HAVE TO ADMIT I'M A LITTLE SCARED, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO STOP. OHHHH!!
I'M ALL RIGHT. I ALMOST FELL, BUT IT'S OKAY NOW.
I'M ALSO CLOSER TO THE LIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU GUYS CAN HEAR ME ANYMORE, BUT I'M ALMOST THERE.
YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER BE ABLE TO HELP OUT, BUT IT SEEMS THAT I REALLY CAN.
I GUESS ALL OF US DO SOMETHING SPECIAL TO--
THE LIGHT... IT'S RIGHT AHEAD OF ME.
I CAN TOUCH IT.
THE LIGHT IS GLOWING GREEN AS I AM, AND THERE IS A YELLOW LIGHT SURROUNDING IT.
THIS EXPLAINS THINGS... THAT'S HOW NINE-CROCODILE WAS ABLE TO ASSEMBLE HIS MACHINE.
TIME OUT. WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
FROM YOUR DESCRIPTIONS OF NINE-CROCODILE, I HAVE BEEN WONDERING HOW HE CREATED HIS DEVICES.
NOW I SEE HE DID NOT-- HE HAS STOLEN WARP-SMITH MACHINERY, THE ABILITY TO WARP TIME AND SPACE...
...AND ADAPTED IT TO HIS OWN USE.
THE TECHNOLOGY IS NON-REPRODUCIBLE. IF WE DESTROY IT, CROCODILE WILL BE UNABLE TO REBUILD HIS DEVICE.
BEANISH IS IN PLACE. WE ARE READY.

ALL RIGHT, I'VE GOT US ALL READY-- GIVE US THE WORD.
NOW!
"DO IT NOW!"

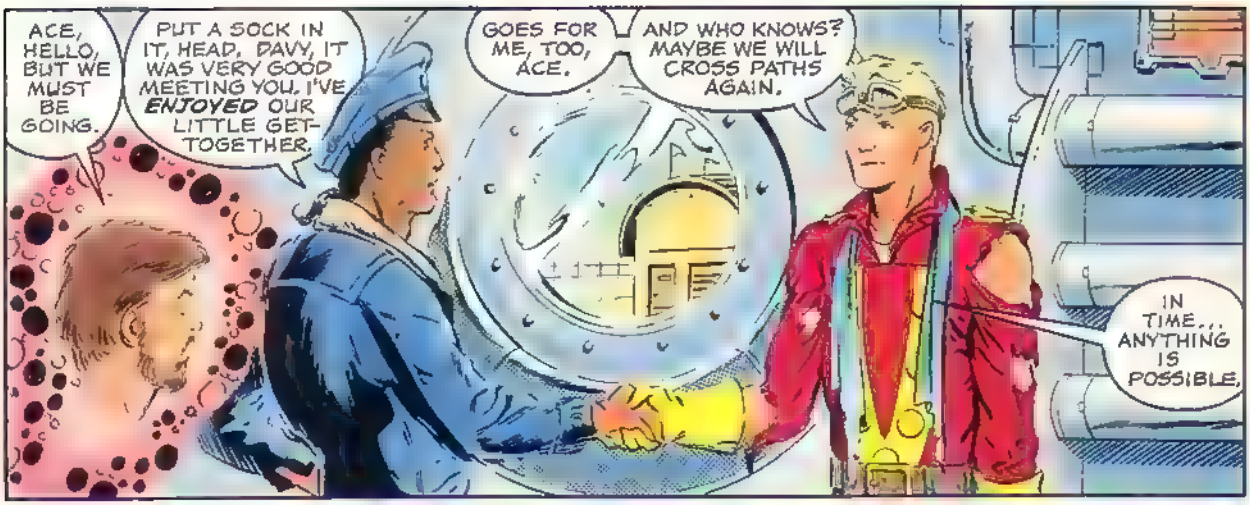
BA-WHAM!

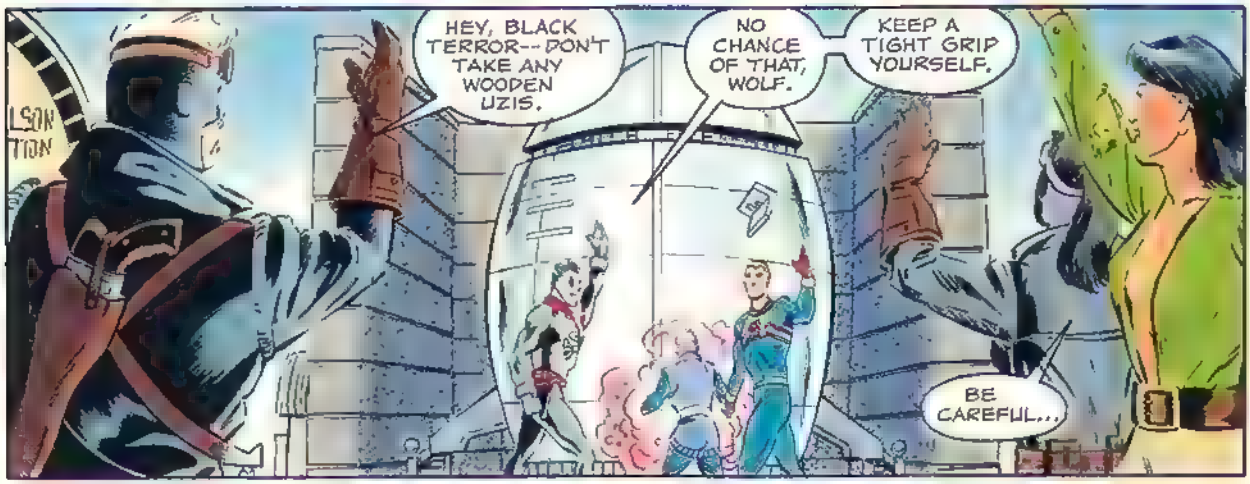
WHEW... I THINK I MADE IT. JUST IN TIME.
TO NO AVAIL, BEAN.
YOU'VE DESTROYED EVERYTHING, BUT YOU'VE ONLY DESTROYED YOURSELVES AS WELL.
I CAN STILL EXPLODE MY SIXTH WORLD AND TAKE YOU WITH IT.
NO, CROCODILE-- I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU WILL.
ARRGGGHHH!
I WON'T BE STOPPED.
NOT BY YOU OR ANYONE.
HE WOULD KILL HIMSELF TO DESTROY US!
GENTLEMEN AND LADIES, I SUGGEST A FORWARD RETREAT MIGHT BE IN OUR BEST INTEREST.
LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!
ISN'T THAT WHAT HE JUST SAID?
30

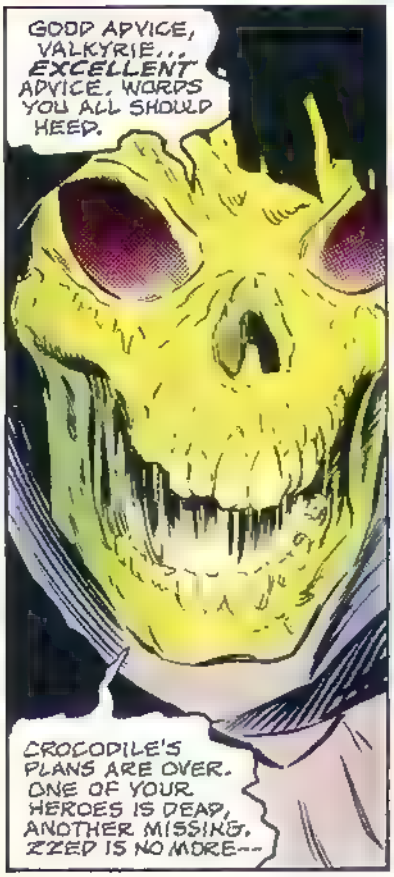
BAARROOOMMMM
WE DID IT... I DON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT WE DID IT. AND WE'RE ALIVE! AT LEAST I THINK WE ARE!
BUT I AM THE MASTER OF TIME... I CONTROL TIME... AND IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME...
...BEFORE VICTORY IS MINE.
BEFORE I RISE AGAIN.
THE SIXTH WORLD IS GONE... AND THEY LIVE.
MY PLANS DESTROYED, AND THEY LIVE.
TIME RETURNS TO NORMAL... AND TIME GOES ON RELENTLESSLY WITHOUT END.

WE'RE HOME...
...I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THAT AGAIN.
MAN, ALL I WANT TO DO IS LAND, KISS THE GROUND AND TAKE A LONG, LOOONNNG SLEEP!
UNTIL NEXT YEAR, IF I CAN.
NAF NELSON AVI
GOD, DOES IT FEEL GOOD THAT IT'S OVER.
"EVEN IF WE CAN'T ALL JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION..."
I'M WITH THE GE BROADCASTING COMPANY. EVERYTHING'S BEEN GOING CRAZY. JUST EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED?
I SUGGEST YOU REMOVE THAT MICRO-PHONE.
BECKER WILL BE COMING TO PICK US UP.
LET'S NOT BE THERE, OKAY?
MAR-LENE... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
ME? WHAT ABOUT YOU? GOD, I WAS SO SCARED FOR YOU.
MOVE THAT INSIDE. CAREFUL!
YES, MR. MANS-FIELD.
USAF #1164
--UNLESS YOU'D LIKE ME TO PLACE IT WHERE I PROMISE IT WILL PROVE MOST UN-BEARABLE.
C'MON, NELSON--THE WHOLE WORLD'S WAITING FOR ANSWERS. YOU CAN'T AVOID THE PRESS.
MIRACLEMAN, DO YOU THINK YOU CAN GET RID OF HIM?
GLADLY.
HMMM... GENTLY.
IF I EVER SEE ANOTHER REPORTER IN MY LIFE...
THEY WON'T TAKE "NO COMMENT" FOREVER, AIRBOY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE THEM ANSWERS.
ME? WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WE'VE GOT A DATE ON THE AZURE CROSSTIME EXPRESS - TO GET THESE PEOPLE BACK TO THEIR DIMENSIONS.
REMEM-BER, WE DON'T ALL LIVE HERE.

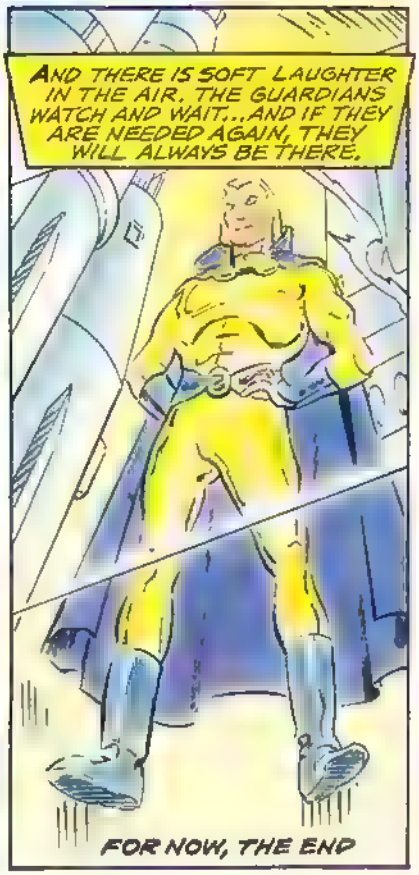
ARE YOU READY?
IT'S BEEN VERY EXCITING BUT I'D REALLY LIKE TO GO HOME NOW.
I KEEP FORGETTING WE'RE FROM SO MANY DIFFERENT WORLDS.
IT MADE LIFE INTERESTING. NOW WE GOTTA MOVE ON.
HEY, MEBBE YOU'RE NO HAMSTER, BUT YOU'RE OKAY... FOR A DUCK.
THIS HAS PROVEN AN INTERESTING DIVERSION, BUT I NEED TO RETURN TO MY EARTH.
I HAVE MANY PRESSING NEEDS.
NO PROBLEM, MIRACLEMAN-- I CAN DROP YOU ALL OFF.
I'M GOING TO MISS YOU THOUGH.
YOU'RE SUCH A FUN-LOVING GUY, ALWAYS WITH THE QUICK QUIP AND READY SMILE.
I MUST ADMIT, FIGHTING ALONGSIDE YOU NOISY HEROES OF LIGHT WASN'T AS BAD AS I THOUGHT.
YEAH, WE DID MESH WELL, DIDN'T WE?
Y'SEE, I GOT THIS IDEA. MAYBE WE COULD GET TOGETHER MORE OFTEN. HAVE REGULAR ADVENTURES.
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
...WELL, IT WAS JUST A SUGGESTION.


ACE, HELLO, BUT WE MUST BE GOING.
PUT A SOCK IN IT, HEAD. DAVY, IT WAS VERY GOOD MEETING YOU. I'VE ENJOYED OUR LITTLE GET-TOGETHER.
GOES FOR ME, TOO, ACE.
AND WHO KNOWS? MAYBE WE WILL CROSS PATHS AGAIN.
IN TIME... ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.


HEY, BLACK TERROR-- DON'T TAKE ANY WOODEN UZIS.
NO CHANCE OF THAT, WOLF.
KEEP A TIGHT GRIP YOURSELF.
BE CAREFUL...


GOOD ADVICE, VALKYRIE... EXCELLENT ADVICE. WORDS YOU ALL SHOULD HEED.
CROCODILE'S PLANS ARE OVER. ONE OF YOUR HEROES IS DEAD, ANOTHER MISSING. ZZED IS NO MORE--

--BUT I SURVIVE, VALKYRIE. MISERY IS FOREVER.
AND MISERY WILL ALWAYS GET HIS WAY-- CORRECT, DUTCHMAN?
REST WELL, YOU SO-CALLED HEROES.
I WANT YOU READY WHEN MISERY NEXT STRIKES.
NONE CAN STOP ME... NO ONE EVER HAS...
...AND NO ONE EVER WILL.


AND THERE IS SOFT LAUGHTER IN THE AIR. THE GUARDIANS WATCH AND WAIT...AND IF THEY ARE NEEDED AGAIN, THEY WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.
FOR NOW, THE END

EPILOGUE:

AIR FIGHTERS
NA
NELSON AVIATION PLANT OUTSIDE OF HALETHORPE, MARYLAND.
TUMBLIN' DICE
STORY CHUCK DIXON ART STAN WOCH
COLORS SAM PARSONS LETTERS KRH
EDITORS CAT YRONWODE & FRED BURKE
WOW.
I GUESS I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

SO WHAT NOW, SKY?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANYBODY ELSE, BUT I NEED A GOOD, STIFF DRINK AFTER ALL THIS.
THEN I'LL NEED SOMEBODY TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED.
WE JUST SAVED THE WORLD, ALL OF EXISTENCE, IN FACT--THAT'S WHAT WE DID, PAL!
YES, BUT WE HAD TO ALLY OURSELVES WITH MISERY TO DO IT
SAVED THE WORLD, huh? MAKE THAT A DOUBLE AND I'M BUYIN'!
SKYWOLF, I DON'T THINK YOUR ATTITUDE IS APPRECIATED BY EVERYONE HERE
YOU WANT TO THROW A PARTY, WOLF? MAKE IT A WAKE!
YOU SEEM TO FORGET AWFUL QUICK THAT THE K'D WHO USED TO WEAR THIS GIZMO IS DEAD. HE MAY HAVE BEEN A PAIN IN THE ASS, BUT HE HAD GUTS TO SPARE
SURE, SARGE. I REMEMBER DENNIS' SACRIFICE--JUST LIKE I REMEMBER THE DEATH OF EVERY DAMN SOLDIER I'VE FOUGHT ALONGSIDE
BUT YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR BEING HAPPY THAT THE WORLD IS SAFE
IT'S SAFE, SKY, AND YOU'VE GOT THE GLORY.

I'VE BEEN AWAY AWHILE BUT FROM WHAT I CAN SEE OF THE WORLD THESE DAYS, IT'S JUST AS FOULED UP AS IT EVER WAS.
MAYBE WE WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF IF THE WHOLE BALL OF WAX DID GO DOWN THE TOILET.
NO...
..."LIFE'S A BITCH AND THEN YOU DIE," RIGHT?
THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH GUYS LIKE YOU. YOU'RE SO PSYCHED UP TO SAVE THE WORLD..
...THEN YOU WHINE WHEN NOBODY THROWS YOU A PARADE.
DENNIS WAS MORE OF A HERO THAN ANY OF YOU!
THEN IT'S TRUE--
--DENNIS IS DEAD?

IT'S TRUE
I...I...
I'M... HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND.
MY NAME IS BOBBY SOONG.
I'M DAVY NELSON.
YEAH, "AIRBOY."
YEAH, WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH US? I CAN TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED
OKAY, BUT THEN YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO HELP ME FIND HIS MOM. SHE'S THE ONLY FAMILY HE HAD.
AND TAKE THIS WITH YOU, KID. I CAN'T STAND THE SIGHT OF IT ANYMORE.
I DON'T WANT IT. IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THIS, DENNIS WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.
GIVE IT TO SOMEONE ELSE
I'LL TAKE IT.

I...
I'LL TAKE IT, SON. SOMETHING WITH POWERS OF THAT PROPORTION SHOULD NOT BE LEFT DRIFTING AROUND WHERE JUST ANYONE CAN GET IT.
IF YOU'VE GOT SOME IDEA THAT YOU'RE GOING TO TALK ME INTO WEARING THAT THING, LEO...
NONSENSE, SCOTT
I WILL ADD IT TO MY COLLECTION.
AS A SOUVENIR OF OUR ADVENTURE
YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT, PROWLER
YOU AND THAT CREEPY THING WERE MADE FOR EACH OTHER
BUT, SARGE... WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
HE DIDN'T HEAR ME
HE HEARD YOU...
HE JUST DOESN'T HAVE AN ANSWER.

THAT'S IT?
WE BAND TOGETHER FOR A FEW DAYS TO SAVE OUR HOME PLANET AND THEN SCATTER TO THE FOUR WINDS?
IT'S OVER, SCOTT.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE US TO DO-- BUY A BIG HOUSE, HIRE A BUTLER, AND ALL LIVE TOGETHER UNTIL THE UNIVERSE IS THREATENED AGAIN?
GROW UP, SCOTT.
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO TAG ALONG WITH US? HE SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN A BAD MOOD.
WHEN ISN'T HE?
NAW, I'M USED TO HIM. YOU GUYS TAKE IT EASY, OKAY?
HEY, KID RIDE WITH ME. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THREE IN BIRDIE.
S-SURE.
Uh... CAN I ASK... I MEAN, I GOTTA TELL HIS MOM... Uh, WHAT HAPPENED TO DENNIS' BODY? I MEAN. FOR THE FUNERAL, AND ALL?
DON'T WORRY. MANSFIELD'S LOOKING AFTER THINGS. NELSON AVIATION TAKES CARE OF ITS OWN.
AN" Trashes
n Cherry Hill

FOLLOW MY COURSE, GANG I KNOW A QUIET LITTLE TAP ROOM AT THE GARRET COUNTY AIRPORT.
LEAD THE WAY, SKY.
WE CAME OUT THE OTHER END OF THIS WHOLE TH NG ALL RIGHT, eh, VAL?
I SUPPOSE,
IT'S AMAZING THAT WE WERE A PART OF SAVING ALL OF EXISTENCE WE MADE A DIFFERENCE, DIDN'T WE, DAVY?
SURE THING, VAL
THAT MAKES ME FEEL LESS...
...INSIGNIFICANT.

...A YOUNG MAN, ON THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD...
ALVIN
...AN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT, WHOSE PROMISING ACADEMIC CAREER WAS...
AW, WHAT'S THE USE?
HEY.
YOU NEED A RIDE?
DO ALL THE GIRLS DRESS LIKE YOU THESE DAYS?
THESE DAYS?
YEAH, I GUESS SO
MAYBE THINGS AREN'T GOING TO BE SO BAD AFTER ALL.
MY NAME'S CALLIE
CALL ME RUSS.
THE END

Ten Years Later

by Dean Mullaney

Like 1978 with our first graphic album, 1981 with our first magazine, and 1982 with our first color comic book, 1985 brought with it a new direction for Eclipse.

Adding the comics published by the defunct Pacific Comics to our existing line-up nearly doubled our output. There were also a few titles Pacific hoped to publish, but which for one reason or another didn't get off the ground. Three of the most interesting creations, as it turned out, were all written and illustrated in England.

The British Invasion was just gaining momentum in America. Britain's blossoming comics field coincided with the strongest U.S. dollar in history. The net result found American publishers looking for British creators and British creators looking for American publishers.

And so it was off to London for me in March 1985 to meet with the creators of the revived *Miracleman*, Alan Moore and Garry Leach; Steve (Pedro Henry) Moore and Steve Dillon of *Axel Pressbutton* fame; and Pete Milligan, Brendan McCarthy, and Brett Ewins, whose *Strange Days* comic introduced Johnny Nemo and Paradax. In the course of working out contractual deals to bring all of these wonderful comics to America, I discovered that British pubs are open odd hours. I never did quite get the hang of it, but it seemed to me that the pubs opened in the morning, closed in mid-afternoon, only to re-open again later in the day. As I say, I didn't quite get the hang of it, and I found myself having warm pints and talking contract points at the strangest hours.

One of the highlights of my visit was dinner at the home of John and Liliana Bolton. I had known John through phone conversations for many years and it was a pleasure to put the voice and face together. John, as everyone knows, draws in a wonderfully classic style; I half expected to see some of his paintings next to the Turner watercolors in the British Museum. I had always pictured John to be one of those nineteenth century artists, and he is, I'm glad to say! What surprised me, however, were the delightful art deco furnishings in John and Liliana's home. I'm not quite sure what I expected; I think late Victorian or art nouveau

surroundings. Certainly not the type of art deco furniture I had spent days looking for in Islington antique stores. At last I knew why I wasn't able to find any good pieces available—the Boltons had already bought them!

Vacations—even working vacations—never last forever, and I returned with agreements in hand to publish *Miracleman* and the other series.

Simultaneously, we had other new projects in the works, certainly the most important of which was Timothy Truman's *Scout*. We met Tim at least a year before he proposed the series to us, when he was out visiting his long-time buddy from their Kubert School days, our neighbor Tom Yeates. The result of that first meeting was a one-shot we published called *Killer Tales by Timothy Truman*. It included some stories Tim drew while working for TSR, and also contained the last story written by the great Gardner Fox, which Tim had a blast working on.

And so when Tim called us up a year or so later and asked if we were interested in publishing his new creation *Marauder: 1999*, we said "sure." The name was eventually changed to the now familiar *Scout*.

Tim attends a lot of comics conventions each year and I hope many of you have met him. If you have, you know what I'm about to say; if you haven't, you've got a treat to look forward to. When the bad guys have you outnumbered and trapped in a dark alley, Tim's one of those guys you'd want to have at your back. Not that he's really the rough and tough guy you'd think he was from reading his comics; no, it's his friendship, his loyalty, and his dedication that makes the man.

Scout, needless to say, was a hit from the start, and we've all enjoyed ourselves ever since.

With so many titles in production each month, Cat, Sean, Jan, and I were feeling the crunch. We needed more people on staff and first turned to a friend of Jan's from the music business, Bruce Palley, to take over some of the accounting and business management duties. Among other things, Bruce was a tour accountant for the Rolling Stones, and dealt with bands like Def Leppard. Business management may not be the most glamorous job in the comics industry, but when you consider how many comics companies have come and gone during the ten years Eclipse has been publishing, I think you'll appreciate how important it is. At any rate, it wasn't long before Bruce became a vice president in the company. I don't know when he finds the time to sample them all, but Bruce appears to know every good restaurant between Fort Lee, New Jersey and the east side of Manhattan. To watch Bruce raise his eyebrows and nod his head in approval once the appetizers meet his standards is certainly a joy in itself.

Another important part of the Eclipse equation came our way through a combination of Coca-Cola and a neon sign. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the Chicago Comics Con and the Dallas Con were held on the same (July 4th) weekend. Since Cat and I don't have the superpower enabling us to be two places at once, we usually split up for the conventions and meet afterwards to take our summer vacation.

In 1984, Cat went to Dallas while I headed up to Chicago. The organizers of the Dallas con are among the nicest, friendliest people in the country. There are always gofers running around asking if you need anything, if you're having a good time, and all the sort of things big, friendly Texas people ask you. Well, at this convention, an eager and energetic young fan whom we had met the year before volunteered to get Cat some Coke and then stand watch over the famous Eclipse neon sign while she took a look through the dealers' room. When she returned, the young man was giving portfolio hints to an aspiring fan artist, and referring to Eclipse as "us," which impressed Cat so much that she offered to pay him to help her out at the con. Being a friendly Texan, the kid refused any payment, but asked if he could come out and work as an intern in the editorial department.

Getting his future boss a Coke may not be the most novel way to enter the comics business, but it certainly worked for Fred Burke, who five years later

is—in addition to editing Clive Barker's *Tapping the Vein*, scripting scores of Japanese manga, and the creator of *phaze*—the editor of *Total Eclipse*! Now Fred has his own legion of fans who bring *him* Cokes when he returns to his native Texas for the Dallas con!

To meet the demands of a constantly increasing schedule of comics, we brought in a number of people who remain good friends even in their positions elsewhere. Former editor David Allen is now the managing editor of the Rohnert Park (California) *Clarion*; former sales manager Jim Friel is an integral part of the Capital City Distribution team; and former assistant Beppe Sabatini continues to create memorable new comics stories.

When January 1986 rolled around it looked like another great year. Don Chin, whom we had met at a few conventions over the years, came to us with a new comic he created entitled *Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters*, a parody of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, itself a parody of a number of then current fads and hits, in paticularly Frank Miller's *Ronin*. Don was selling parody strips to *Cracked Magazine* and *ARBBH* was a natural outgrowth of that. The idea of a parody of a parody cracked us up. It cracked up mostly everyone else, too, because it became a surprise monster hit. It seems odd to me that Don's *Hamsters* set off such an incredible craze for black-and-white parody comics, a craze that lasted way too long. At the time, the *Turtles* were already an established sensation, but it wasn't until a while after the first *Hamster* issue that the fad developed. Who would have guessed...?

Months later, Don discovered something else of interest to us in the Eclipse office. Don lives up in Eureka, California, about twice as far north from here as we are from San Francisco. One evening, returning from a concert in the City, Don stayed over at our place. Like a good guest, he brought a sleeping bag with him just in case. When he unzipped the nylon bag, Bob the Cat completely flipped out and tried to run right through the glass back door! It took us a while to figure out that it was the nylon that drove Bob berserk, nylon that (to him) sounded like raging water. You see, we found Bob after the great Guerneville flood, in which he was trapped in a flooded house for nearly a week.

Ah yes, the flood! By mid-January, the daily rains in northern California had become a way of life. After a few weeks we felt like we were living through that Ray Bradbury story in *The Illustrated Man* about the planet of never-ending rain. Finally, on Valentine's Day, all hell—and the dam upstream—let loose, and our entire town flooded. The story of that flood—in which we lost homes, most of our worldly possessions, and the entire Eclipse comic book inventory—has been recounted elsewhere, particularly in the "Penumbra" column that appears on the inside front cover of most of our comics.

I'll spare you the details of Sean and I wading through our respective houses, waist-deep in muddy water, or of Cat waiting for the Red Cross canoe to rescue her from our office, or of people rowing down the aisles of the Safeway supermarket, picking up canned food for over 1,000 stranded townspeople. The flood and its aftermath set us back tremendously. With the help of many, many people, including Tom Yeates, Lela Dowling, Ken Macklin, Tim Truman, and Mark Evanier, we picked ourselves up and by mid-July, hit the stands with the first issues of our latest innovation: bi-weekly comics!

Airboy and *The New Wave* debuted that summer and started our working relationship and friendship with *Airboy* scripter Chuck Dixon. Remember what I said about Tim Truman earlier? Well, the same applies to Chuck. There are few people I've ever met who I can unequivocably say are the kind I'd want with me in that dangerous dark alley. The 4Winds duo (does that make them 2Winds?) are among them. Chuck and Tim's first *Airboy* storyline remains, I believe, one of the best stories I've ever published. In fact, we'll be repackaging those first five issues in a deluxe graphic album in June so it will be preserved

The brothers Mullaney, with cousins and grandfather, in their grandfather's store, July 1960. Jan's at the far left, Dean at the far right. Notice the comic book rack at the bottom right.

on bookshelves forever.

One of the reasons we decided to publish *Airboy* and *The New Wave* in a bi-weekly format was to test reader response. For two years previous, I had been negotiating with various Japanese comics publishers to bring Japanese *manga* to America, and since *manga* stories run so long, I hoped to publish the English versions on a bi-weekly schedule. Encouraged by the reaction to our bi-weekly American comics, we got the negotiations with Japanese publishers into high gear.

By January 1987, Fred Burke and Letitia Glozer came on staff full-time and when the negotiations were completed to publish *Kamui*, *Mai the Psychic* Girl, and *Area 88*, they were given the editorial assignments for those books.

Letitia, as a few thousand of you already know, is Cat's half-sister, but hiring her was not just a case of rampant nepotism. As Cat explains it, she knew Letitia had the potential to be a truly great comics editor from an early age because when she went off to college, she left her *Pogo* paperbacks behind, and when she returned, Letitia had appropriated them! Seriously, though, Letitia's interest in fine art serves us well, as she edits such deluxe material as Scott Hampton's *Pigeons from Hell*, Bo Hampton's *Lost Planet*, Alan Moore and John Totleben's (soon to be Neil Gaiman and Mark Buckingham's) *Miracleman*., and such critical favorites as *The Dreamery* and *Fusion*.

The "Conceptual Editor" of *The Dreamery* and *Fusion* is Lex Nakashima. He's also the CE of an upcoming fantasy mini-series that I can't tell you about yet. Lex is to comics what Sol Hurok is to opera: he is a true impressario who conceives a vehicle in which to present the talent he admires. Both *The Dreamery* and *Fusion* have been a labor of love for Lex. There are very few things we at the Eclipse office enjoy more than a visit from Lex, Lela Dowling, and Ken Macklin. When Lex's smiling face peers in our window, we pretty much give up the idea of working for the rest of the afternoon. Y'see, Lex, Lela, and Ken usually show up bearing cookies, fruit, salame, cheese, and party favors, and their arrival is always a great excuse to sit around chewing the food and the fat. Lex is in the process of producing a horror film being shot in the southwest, and we're anxiously looking forward to seeing production stills. When the film's released, Cat will surely let you know in the "Penumbra."

Before I get to the bottom of this page and the end of this final essay, I'd like to say a word or two about one of the more visible Eclipse people out there—Beau "LaDuke" Smith, our intrepid Sales Manager. Most of you know Beau as this tough guy, who always talks about guns and ammo, action and adventure, and beer, women, and song. But I know better. At the risk of blowing Beau's cover, I've got to tell you that he wouldn't hurt a fly. So what if he collects guns, reads *Executioner* books until the covers wear off, and thinks John Wayne was the greatest American who ever lived. Beau's a working man Democrat, of the Dixiecrat variety, and he reminds me of a cross between Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt and a hero out of Zane Grey's westerns.

I'm sure most of you will meet him on one outing or another, and when you do, pat him on the back from me for a job well done.

Well, that's all there is, folks. Thanks for taking the time to read these words, and I hope you enjoyed the *Total Eclipse* storyline Marv, Fred, and Bo brought you. I'd appreciate getting some mail from our readers, so please send it to "Total Comments" c/o Eclipse Comics. I'll be sure to read every letter you send.

Finally, since I don't write comics and therefore never get the chance to dedicate anything to anyone, here's my one big chance and I'm not going to let it slip by. This one's for my mom, for every reason you can imagine.

WHO'S WHO
IN TOTAL ECLIPSE

The Heap WWI flying ace Baron Von Emmelman was shot down in a swamp, becoming the original bog thing.

This marauding mallard is out for vengeance against the powerful Godcorp. **Destroyer Duck**

Flying Dutchman Skywolf's old ally is now trapped in Misery's dreaded Airtomb.

Smart and cunning, Bruce weilds the bo staff with the expertise of the great monk master. He drives nice sports cars in his spare time. **Bruce**

Marlene Valkyrie's best friend and confidante, Marlene shares a Manhattan apartment with the swashbuckling model/heroine.

The youngest of the ARBBH, Jackie would rather be watching "Pee Wee's Playhouse" than saving the universe from destruction. **Jackie**

Bobby Soong Bobby was Dennis Foreman's best friend before he became Strike—and tried to be, after.

The most spiritual black belt hamster, Chuck vows never to inflict pysical harm to others unless the safety of loved ones is in jeopardy. **Chuck**

Lester Mansfield Nelson Aviation's security chief is in reality the dwarf son of Rackman.

The "original party animal" before Spuds McKenzie ever hit the scene, Clint walks short and carries a big gun—his trusty .44 Magnum! **Clint**

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Finale!

It approaches with unbearable swiftness, as every hero—from the tiniest bean to the mightiest god—answers the call with unequalled courage. Dr. Eclipse must at last lead this strange band of allies in a race against time itself, run amok.

The gem which transformed the immortal Zzed into a being of unimaginable power appears indestructible—and deadly beyond compare. It seethes with the malignant energy of the total eclipse, which will destroy our time, our universe.

The end is near.

On earth and in the meld, this final battle presses on, as untold power, ability, and knowledge are added to the arsenal for good. But Misery and Nine-Crocodile will not die. Only the combined might of a universe's heroes can stop their unholy alliance. And billions of lives hang in the balance.

Total Eclipse

It's Eclipse Comics' Tenth Anniversary. In this issue, you'll encounter Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf, Miracleman, The Prowler, Strike, the Heap, Aztec Ace and many other stars from Eclipse's first decade of innovative comics publishing.

Marv Wolfman, writer, is the author of *The New Teen Titans, Crisis on Infinite Earths, Tomb of Dracula*, and countless other acclaimed comic books. The Zzed saga is his most intricate plot to date.

Bo Hampton, pencil artist, is well-known for his detailed linework and powerful layouts in books such as *Airboy, Lost Planet, Luger*, and *The New Mutants*. *Total Eclipse* is a new peak in his artistic development.

Rick Bryant, ink artist, has graced the pages of *Miracleman, Marvel Fanfare, Moon Knight*, and *World of Krypton*. In *Total Eclipse*, he perfectly complements Hampton's detail with his own dynamic style.

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